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Susanna : In Introduction.

CHAPTER V.

THE ATELIER.



SUSY'S room was over the sitting-room, and looked towards the garden. It was a narrow, little whitewashed slip. The bed was hung with yellow curtains, that were fastened to a gilt crown suspended from the ceiling; there was a marble washstand, with a looking-glass with one Cyclops eye reflecting the light; there was a wooden chest of drawers, and a trunk containing her modest possessions; and a peg or two, from which hung Susy's cloak and her black bonnet with its long veil; as the breeze came blowing through the open window the veil gently floated. There was also an arm-chair with four straight legs and a huge yellow paunch; a little pair of red slippers

stood against the bed. The walls were quite bare, except for a little pencil drawing of the dear old rectory. The room itself opened upon a wide landing, which was used for many purposes, as a store for washing lines,

for potato sacks, piles of firewood, and, besides all this it contained various ladders and trap-doors and long poles. Susy, who had got up early one morning soon after her arrival, was startled by a faint scream, and, opening her door, found an unexpected pair of neat black legs suspended mid-air from a ladder which had been let down from the ceiling.

"'Elp! 'elp!" says Madame's voice, somewhat muffled, from above. "Denise, *venez!* I am lost; I cannot get down. Ah! who is it—is it you, Miss Susy? Come up, careful, and guide my feet. Ah! that is right. Thank you," says Madame, once landed from the ladder, panting and shaking herself. "That good-for-nothing Max, it is all 'im. He will not 'ave the apples in his *atelier*—such fancies! I went up to see if there was room in the *grenier*, and I lost my poor old head."

"Had you been there long?" said Susy.

"An age," said Madame mysteriously. "I have scream for an age. You 'ave save my life."

Madame must have had good nerves, for she soon recovered her breath and her composure, and she invited Susy to accompany her on her explorations. Madame led the way downstairs, the neatest imaginable little Rembrandt-like figure in her white cap and black skirts. "Was it not a well-built handsome house?" she said. "Her poor 'usban' had planned it all. It was hers now; it would all belong to Max some day—he was her only son."

"Is he a painter?" said Susy.

"No; he is a graver on steel. This is where he work," said Madame, as she opened the great door of the *atelier* with pride and led the way into a huge room with a big window, built out into the garden. It was more like a barn than anything else. It was furnished in the simplest, roughest way; but there was something which gave a touch of life and of romance to it all, to the odds and ends, the plaster casts, the photographs upon the walls; to the old orange curtain swinging across the window; it was the something which belongs to all that concerns those mystical worlds of art, those dreams, eternal, of life which passes away.

Madame, who had some perception under her frill nightcap, secretly wished for Max to make a drawing of the young Life now walking into his great shabby *atelier*. The slanting stream of morning came dazzling from the high window into the girl's face, and as she moved aside she found Madame's blinking eyes approvingly fixed upon her.

"Ah! you should know my son," said Madame, who did not beat about the bush; "he want to marry; he is a good boy, very 'andsome, not like me. He take after his poor fazzar."

"And is your son engaged to be married?" Susy asked.

"No," says Madame; "I have not yet found the lady. He say to me, 'Mamma, find me a wife if you will, but she must 'ave a *dot*. I 'ave seen you and my poor papa in such torment and difficulty for money that I will not marry without a *dot*. I should wish my wife to 'ave a car-

riage, if possible. This house is so far from the *barrière!* It is reasonable, is it not, and well said?"

"Very reasonable, indeed," said Susy, laughing. She did not take interest enough in M. Max to be shocked by Madame's very matter-of-fact explanations.

"Max he works *à l'eau forte*," continued Madame, beginning to dust and straighten. "He have worked for all the best houses; he have made pictures for Mr. Charles Blanc. Look, that is his table," and she pointed to a business-like-looking table in a window shaded by a slanting frame through which the light came softened by silver paper. All the many murderous appliances of the peaceful art—daggers, stilettos, sharpened blades and piercing points—were heaped in the tray; the dabbers lay together, the oil-pots and acids stood in a row along a shelf against the wall. A sort of iron oven had been erected near the fireplace, to which Madame proudly pointed. "Those are the hot plates; you could not touch them when the gas is turned on. The extravagant! He buy that pretty piano only last year. He is never here to touch upon it. Do you like music? You can come when you like to play."

Susy's eyes brighten at this permission.

"You need not be afraid to come—Max 'ave not been near the place for two month. That is his portrait—wicked, good-for-nothing;" and she pointed to a charcoal head curling from the wall where it had been fastened by a single nail. It represented a long-nosed, frizzle-headed person with a sort of grin. "It is like," said Madame. "Ah! you will see he is a 'andsome fellow. There are his portfolios. Look, what he can do;" and while Madame ferreted about with dusters and spectacles, Susy opened the big portfolio on the chair, and began turning over picture after picture, not a little puzzled by some, delighted by others. She had absolutely no experience or knowledge of art, but some natural taste. As she stood there, some one came in at the door; it was not the owner of the studio, only the lodger—the Colonel—coming back from his water-cure, who now stood looking in, attracted, as most idle people are, by an open doorway.

"Come in, come in, Monsieur le Colonel," says Madame hospitably. "Come and see my son's work. You are rich; you should buy some of his pictures to hang on the walls of your châteaux. Show M. le Colonel what you have in that portfolio, my dear child;" and Susy, instinctively turning accomplice, pulled at the yellow curtain to keep out the dazzling sun, and then began holding up one engraving after another.

The Colonel stood by gravely looking through his glasses. There were pictures of every sort—portraits, fancy pieces, Holy Families, original sketches, and copies from the old masters.

"This is a very pretty picture," said Susy, holding up a landscape, delicately etched with sunlight and shade, and water reflecting, and April clouds drifting across the sky.

"That is not unlike Tarndale, where I live; where my children

are at present," said the Colonel, wondering what Susy would say; "it is certainly an admirable engraving."

"Your children?" said Susy, pausing; "have you——?"

He interrupted her. "My children would not seem children to you, Miss Holcombe; my son is seventeen, my daughter is sixteen."

"And her name is Tempy, is it not?" cried Susanna, clasping her hands, with a look very bright and then very sad. "Oh, I am so glad. I hoped so it might be you when mamma told me your name." And then she told him of her meeting at the Castle—of her acquaintance with Tempy—of that happy day, so short a time ago, so long ago. Susy was thankful to speak to anyone who seemed interested, not pained, by what she had to remember. Her mother used always to shrink from it all. To Mrs. Marney the dear old grandfather had only seemed a judge. She had never understood him. It was a delight and an ease of mind to Susy to talk of him, of his goodness, to so kind and sympathising a listener as the Colonel; and then Tempy, too, seemed a fresh bond between them. Were they coming to Paris? How delighted Susy was! If Susy was pleased, her new friend was not less pleased. The girl interested him more and more. What a friend for Tempy! How glad he should be to bring them together!

"Well, what are you about? you are not looking at the pictures!" cried Madame; and Susy, recalled to her duty, held up a new print.

"Here is a *very* pretty one," said she. "I think this must be Ruth and Naomi."

"Yes, my dear child," said the old lady, coming up and giving her an approving pat. "Ah! *that* is the daughter-in-law I should wish to have. Just see how well it is done; look at the veil, Colonel, and the necklace. And the expression! Oh, what expression!"

"But Ruth had no *dot*, Madame," said Susy, a little maliciously, with one of her pretty bright looks.

"Ding, dong, ding, dong, Soooooo; ding, dong, Soooooo," comes from the garden outside. One little brother is rattling a stick in a flower pot, the other is pretending to be a bell. "Venez déjeuner, Soooo!" cry the children in the jumble of French and English habitually used by those young Anglo-Parisians. They come thumping along the passage to the doors of the studio, peep in, and run away, and Susy turns at the summons, nods farewell to her Colonel and to Madame.

"Do not forget to come and play the piano," said Madame, calling after her. "You shall give my little grandchild some music lessons, if you like."

"I should be very glad," said Susy simply; and, as she spoke, an idea came into the worthy Colonel's head.

Long afterwards, in different times and circumstances, she remembered that quiet half-hour in the shabby *atelier*, with its treasures and makeshifts. The little boys trotted along the passage, followed by their sister. The summons to breakfast was an improvisation on their part.

The meal was still frizzling and boiling in the pans and pots through which breakfast is transmogrified on its way to the table. The children burst open a door with an accustomed air; Susy followed, and found herself, not in the dining-room, but in a sunny little kitchen full of fumes and sunshine, where her mother stood bending over the stove. It was a contrast to her last invasion. Mrs. Marney looked up confused, somewhat displeased, and blushing crimson, with a spoon in her hand and her dress pinned back.

"Oh! mamma," cried Susy, "why don't you make me do this?" and she sprang forward. "Are these your letters that you write before breakfast?"

"I—I thought you would be vexed, dear, if I told you it was I who did the cooking, not Denise," said Mrs. Marney humbly. "I know all this is not what you have been accustomed to at home."

"Don't," cried Susanna, flinging her arms round her mother's neck. "I have not been accustomed to a mamma."

Meanwhile Mick and Dermott, who seemed bent upon revealing the family secrets, went on their way through a second door, which led across a passage to the little ante-room where the family met at meals. Through this open door came a sudden burst of anger and impatience. "Go away, you urchins. Where the devil is your mother?" cries a voice. "Tell her——"

"Yes, dear, yes," Mrs. Marney calls out, hastily interrupting, and turning back to her eggs again. "Go, Susy dear, and talk to him."

Susy, blushing, and with some repugnance, crossed the passage and said "Good-morning" to her stepfather, who was sitting with a pile of papers at a table where some cups were set upon the oilcloth. He didn't look up, and seemed little inclined for her company; and she went into the sitting-room to wait for her mother's coming. The garden outside looked pleasant and green; the room itself was a scene of confusion. The round table was covered with pens, papers, and ink; a black bottle and a dirty glass stood in the centre, by the lamp, that cloud by day that pillar of light by night, under which Marney wrote his articles and Mrs. Marney patched the family patches.

Opened and unopened a heap of newspapers were flung on a chair by the table: a pair of slippers that Marney had thrown off were lying as they had fallen. There was a sofa with yellow cushions tumbling tipsily about, and a great yellow arm-chair was piled with children's garments; the doors of the cupboard were swinging open. It was a dingy untidy-looking room, and Denise had certainly done little but undo the shutters that morning. Susy, with housewifely instincts, looked round and began folding and straightening some of the disorder into order; she picked up the torn papers from the floor and threw them into the waste-basket. One scrap was written twice, on two different sheets, in Marney's tidy handwriting. Susy could not help seeing it, and wondering what it meant. "It is with the greatest pain and reluctance

that I have written so plainly. Your kind and generous heart will——" Susy blushed, read no more, and threw the paper away with the rest; then she turned to the newspapers—she had laid hands upon one or two of them, and began to pile them tidy when an exclamation from one of the little boys who had come into the room stopped her.

"Mustn't touch," said the little boy, whipping his top. "Father will beat you if you touch."

"I don't think he will beat me, Derm," said Susy, laughing; "but I will leave the papers alone if he does not like them to be touched."

"He always scolds when mamma touches," said Dermott. "*Dis donc, ma sœur,*" continued the little boy, "did the Colonel give you any pictures?" and the child came up and slipped his hand into Susy's. The little bright face looked up quite artlessly. Susy was puzzled. "He gave me no pictures, dear," she said, stroking his head.

"Why didn't you ask for some?" said the other little fellow. "We always ask." It was very little; but Mikey's announcement made poor Susy's heart sink with vague apprehension. She already felt that there must be much in her new life from which she must turn away, much that she must be content to ignore. A time came before very long when the poor girl could no longer pretend not to see what was passing before her eyes. The difficulties, the straits, the shifts, and extravagances of the little household were all patent enough.

Susy used to meet the Colonel constantly after that morning, as people do meet who are living in little suburban boarding-houses. One day he stopped, and looked greatly embarrassed, and finally asked her whether it was true that she had consented to give little Marie lessons in music.

"Yes," said Susy, "I am very proud of earning a little money."

"It has occurred to me that perhaps you would allow your friend Tempy to profit by your delightful acquirement," said the Colonel. "The music mistress we have been counting upon has just failed us. If you would agree to my daughter's terms, it will be a great kindness on your part."

"But I couldn't teach well enough," said Susy, blushing and opening her round eyes, "and I'm sure if I could, I wouldn't like to—to——"

"I know I have offended you," said the Colonel, looking so crestfallen that, rather than give him pain, Susy doubtfully agreed.

"It is absurd," said she, looking up, "but I know what you have done for mamma. Will you let me try to pay part of her debt to you?"

"We will talk of that presently," said the Colonel, brightening again. "I will come and speak to your mother, if she is at home this afternoon."

A little later in the day the Colonel came as he had promised. Marney was out; Mrs. Marney and her daughter were sitting together in the window of the sitting-room. "Come in, Colonel," said Mrs. Marney, in her friendly welcoming way. "What is this my Susy tells me?" The Colonel had soon talked Mrs. Marney over; she was willing

enough that Susy should be paid, and indeed her admiration for Susy's music was unbounded. "I can't think where the child gets it all; I never could play a note," Mrs. Marney declared. This matter being settled, the Colonel presently found himself with a poetry-book in his hand, reading to the two as they sat at their darns. He had not done anything so sweet and to his taste for a very long time; as he read he looked up and saw Susy's eyes fixed upon his; dry old Colonel as he was, the girl's bright look touched him. He went back to his rooms feeling as if they were strangely dull and deserted. And still more so was the grand apartment he had taken for his son and daughter, to which he reluctantly moved next day. All the life and interest in the place seemed to him centred in that bare little parlour, where the two women were sitting at work, hour after hour, while the little boys played in the garden outside. Tempy was a very dear girl, and Fanny was a very superior woman; but they did not seem to make things look so peacefully *home like* as these two. Tempy would have opened her eyes if she could have read her father's thought. What, *that* a home—that little shabby, untidy parlour, scattered over with scraps? Impossible!

CHAPTER VI.

PIANO.

THE sound of a piano came through a window that opened on to a stone balcony. The hesitating notes echoed along a street or avenue, which had been lately built not far from the Arc de Triomphe, at Paris. The music struck the stone and reverberated into the dry blazing sunshine, and then seemed absorbed in the dust and the acacia trees that were planted at intervals along the road, and which cast their dumpy shadows on the ground. Everything was so hot and so glaring that very few people were about; a few par-baked figures went quickly by; the shutters of the houses were closed; the people were hiding inside from the fierce rays. There is a silence about the midday sunshine which must have struck us all at times, when the houses are shut up, as if in protest; when the shadows scarcely shade, and the sun burns in fierce intenseness, then it is that the distant piano is heard echoing, whose notes we can all remember in so many places in the hottest hour of the day. A close carriage rolled by, a cat darted across the pavement and ran up a white wall, and then after an interval a drifting figure in black came along the pavement. It stopped at the door of the house from whence the piano had been sounding. The figure was only Susy, who put up a shabby black glove and rang a great bell; and when the door opened stepped from the glare outside into the cool vestibule with its stone staircase and glazed arches. Colonel Dymond's scheme had actually come to pass. Tempy and Jo were established at Paris, and the music lessons and the meetings he had hoped for were realities, serious realities to Susy, who conscientiously

spared nothing to fulfil her bargain, and came wearily through the blazing streets day by day, trying to stimulate her pupil into some genuine effort and interest. Tempy looked upon it all as very great fun, she thought it must be of great advantage to Susy, with her shabby gloves, to have her for a pupil. She was as enthusiastic as ever about her, and ready to patronise her to any extent, all the more so that Aunt Fanny, who was for ever surveying the world from her own particular pedestal, had for some weeks past been made uneasy by Miss Holcombe's visits to Tempy. She remembered Susy quite well, Susy and her pretty looks and her sudden blushes, and it didn't seem to Miss Bolsover that this young lady was at all the sort of person who should be constantly an inmate of her brother-in-law's house. Aunt Fanny's tacit objections had, if anything, given extra interest to the music lessons for Tempy. One letter after another had been coming, deprecating, hinting, suggesting a whole series of music masters; there was Pocoforte so well spoken of, Herr Thumpentang so highly recommended.

On this particular morning Miss Dymond, crossing the hall, had found the usual Aunt-Fanniad lying on the table. This one was more emphatic, if possible, than any which had gone before. Tempy opened her eyes as she read it, it was difficult to forget it entirely. She could not but feel of some extra consequence with such a letter in her pocket. "You are old enough to know something of life," wrote Aunt Fanny, "and I need not say that this is for you alone. Do not encourage that girl too much. You must be wise for others. Jo is young, and even your father is of an impulsive nature, and might not be able to see *as a woman does* by some instinct what secret motives a girl may conceal beneath an apparently *artless* manner."

When the servant announced "*La maitresse de piano à Mademoiselle,*" Tempy jumped up from her stool, and came forward even more eagerly than usual, "How *could* you come through this furnace?" she said. "How brave of you! How glad I am to see you!"

Miss Tempy was not a little transformed from the wild nymph of Tarndale waters, and even the fashionable young lady at the castle might seem outdone by the present frizzed, flounced, Parisian belle. Tempy was not unconscious of her elegant appearance; and she occasionally put on a curious starched and mincing manner to match her toilette. Jo used to laugh; but her father was rather dazzled by it, and thought that she now reminded him of her poor mother. But if Tempy was improved, Susy was very much altered by her few weeks' experience of the changes and chances of life. Her innocent beaming look was perturbed, and the clear waters of her eyes were troubled. Her clothes looked shabby and dusty in the hot white glare, and among the gilded splendours of the Colonel's drawing-room, the smart arm-chairs and satin sofas that were sprawling about the room. Great flower-jars stood filled with handsome exotics, and candelabra on the chimneys. The curtains were silk covered with Chinese bridges; the tables were rampant

with golden legs. Tempy, radiant in the centre of this shrine, sat, with the pedal down, banging at the piano.

The boy looked up from his book and nodded, without changing his attitude, as Susy came in.

"How tired you look!" says the hostess, helping the black figure off with its black hat and dusty shawl.

"Tempy, do ring for some seltzer-water," says the boy on the sofa, without looking up; "one never gets anything in this house without making a fuss."

Our friend Tempy gave a tug to the great bell-rope and the seltzer came just as Miss Holcombe, turning pale, had sank wearily into a seat by the piano.

"There, take that," says Jo, getting up lazily, filling a glass and giving it to the music mistress; "one orders things for oneself, and somebody else always wants them."

Susy was not offended, she laughed and drank, and as she drank the colour came back. Presently the lesson begins. Miss Holcombe can hardly aspire to the title of music mistress, but she is thoroughly in earnest and doing her very best; Miss Dymond is not in the least in earnest. Conversational, digressive, she attends on and off, makes the same mistakes over and over again, presently begins a discussion about the pedal. "The passage should be played lightly, not with too much expression," says Susy, and she bends forward, serious and stern, and plays the passage with a very precise and delicate touch.

"I don't agree with you," says Tempy, quite unconvinced. "I like the pedal myself, and I like people to play as if they felt the music all over, not as if they were only listening to it."

"But putting the pedal down does not always mean that one feels more intensely," said Susanna; "it means that one says more about one's feelings."

"I like talking about my feelings," said Tempy; "if I feel a thing, why should not I say it? I like to look at you; I think you perfectly lovely, and I like to tell you so."

"There goes Tempy's pedal," said the boy, looking up from his book.

"Papa said so, too," cries Tempy.

"It always sickens me to hear second-hand conversations about myself," repeated Jo, turning over a page.

"Whoever would repeat conversations about *you*!" cries Tempy, with a sisterly shriek of laughter.

"G sharp, G G G, please," says Miss Holcombe, blushing, and striking the note, and once more the two start off on their pilgrimage along the weary pages of the music book, among the shoals and the pitfalls, the occasional flats and sharps, from level to level, over a mountain pass, and so at last into a wide and lovely plain, easy, smiling, and beautiful.

And then the drawing-room door opens, and the Colonel comes in.

Tempy looks round, and leaves off playing altogether. "Well, papa," says she cheerfully, "what have *you* been about?" Jo gets up, somewhat disconcerted, from his sofa, pulls down a blind, pulls it up again, and goes out of the room. The music mistress glances at the clock; the Colonel sits down stiffly on a chair in the middle of the room. He looks somewhat out of place, though it is his own hired golden chair and his own hired house. He is not an uncommon type of Colonel, well brushed and baked, with a brown face and a white moustache and an expression of great seriousness. His manner took people in who did not know him well—even Susy felt a little in awe of him here especially, more so than in the apartment at home; she blushed up nervously to-day when the Colonel turned to his daughter, and said:—

"Tempy, if you will put your bonnet on, I will take you for a drive. I have a few words to say to Miss Holcombe first."

"Have you, papa?" says Tempy, looking surprised; then she remembered that the lessons had not yet been paid for, and added, "Oh, to be sure," and left the room, banging the door and singing at the pitch of her voice.

"I wanted to ask you a question," said the Colonel, looking very much embarrassed. "I can only beg you, my dear young lady, to take it in good part as it is meant," and he looked away as he spoke. "You are perhaps aware," he continued, "that I am an older friend than I imagined when I first had the pleasure of meeting your mother at Madame du Parc's. I must have known her at Carlisle before her second marriage."

"Did you know mamma so long ago?" said Susanna, blushing with pleasure: quite young and old people are alike in respecting the past. "I have lived so little with her that I scarcely know all her old friends."

"I hope you will always remember me as one of them," said the Colonel very courteously, and then he sighed a little sadly. It seemed to him so unlikely that this bright young creature should have any constant remembrance or thought for him; as for his own recollections they were of the vaguest description. "And now," said the Colonel, looking thoughtfully at the neat reflection of himself in the great gilt mirror opposite, "I am going to ask you to speak plainly to me as to an old friend and to forgive me for asking you whether your good mother keeps the control of the money which comes to her in her own right. She kindly trusts me, and is good enough to tell me of her affairs at times; and now I find that she is in some temporary annoyance, from which I should most gladly relieve her if——" The Colonel had gone on talking, without looking at Susy, but suddenly some movement reflected in the glass caught his attention, and he turned round in some consternation. The girl's pale face had flushed crimson, her drooping eyes were full of tears of angry shame and vexation; she seemed to shiver with ill-concealed annoyance. The Colonel had given the note into her hand.

"Has mamma been writing this to you?" she said, the first sen-

tence seemed strangely familiar. "It is with the greatest reluctance," she read; and then, "your kind and generous heart"—she had seen it all before. "Oh, that is his doing; he made her write!" Susy cried, with a sort of passionate choke, starting up and throwing the letter away. It was a most painful moment; the Colonel felt quite bewildered and distressed; he backed his chair.

"My dear young lady," said he, "pray, pray, be calm. We are all of us at times accustomed to look for help from those who are interested in us. Literary men, as we know, are not very practical. Mr. Marney may have been unfortunate in his arrangements.

"Unfortunate!" said Susy bitterly.

"Well," said the Colonel, "that I will not go into now. We must do the best we can under the circumstances, and see if we can help your good mother."

"What can you or I or anybody do?" said Susanna, with a fresh burst of indignation. "Don't help her, don't try to do so; believe me it is the kindest thing in the end; and pray, believe that I come here to give your daughter music lessons, and not—not to beg for money."

Susy's natural youthful pride overcame her gratitude as she spoke; but she could not but melt again, when the Colonel, looking very kindly at her, said:—

"My dear girl, do believe me when I tell you that I look upon it as a privilege to be allowed to—a—participate in your mother's affairs. An old fellow does not want much in life. My children have all they can require, and the one luxury I allow myself is that of feeling that I can sometimes be of use to an old friend;" as he spoke he put out his hand, and Susanna, as suddenly grateful as she had been unreasonably angry, caught it in both hers.

"Dear Colonel Dymond, forgive me; how much too good you are!" she said, and her voice seemed to vibrate, and to fill the room.

The Colonel, who lived a very lonely life, although he was surrounded by many people, felt as if his whole fortune might be well bestowed if it brought forth one such sweet look and tone as this. He was immensely touched and interested; he might have said so if he had followed his impulse; but he resisted it, and only looked very kindly at the beautiful young creature struggling for the first time with the bitter experience of life and its impossibilities. He was still holding her hand, and she was still looking at him with her grateful, speaking eyes, when the door opened, and Tempy walked in ready dressed for her outing, bonneted, jacketed, with her yard-long gloves buttoned tight, and a general air of business-like expectation. The Colonel let go Susy's hand. Susy blushed up, she knew not why.

How often it happens that the great events of life seem to come about by chance, quite simply, in a moment.

It was with Aunt Fanny's letter in her pocket that poor Tempy flung open the drawing-room door and walked in upon the *côte-à-côte*.

"Dear me," said she; "how very strange;" and she looked at Susy with a disagreeable stare not unlike one of Aunt Fanny's own glances.

"What do you mean, Tempy?" said the Colonel, firing up. "Is this the way you dare to speak to me and to your friend?"

When people who love each other quarrel, the absence of accustomed tenderness is almost worse than the superadded anger of the moment. Tempy, strong in her feeling of injured innocence, felt bitterly aggrieved. "My friend, papa!" said she. "You seem to have monopolised her!" Then remembering Aunt Fanny's warnings: "I would not believe it till now; I suppose this is what she has been coming for all this time."

The Colonel, white with passion, turned from Tempy to Susanna, who was standing scared and holding to a chair. Then he closed his eyes, and the colour came back to his cheeks. There was something pathetic in his momentary struggle with himself, and in the voice with which he now spoke.

"My child insults you," said the Colonel, trembling very much and turning to Susy; "and I can only repeat her words, and tell you that if indeed I could hope to monopolise you, to win your affection, I might feel that at last I had a home once more. Think of it. I might not have spoken, but now I feel it is only fair that you should know the truth, now that others have perceived it."

"Oh, no, no, no!" cried poor Susy. "Oh, I must go back to mamma; you have been so dear, so kind, till now—now I won't come anymore. I will try to forget it all." She looked from one to the other. Tempy stood hanging her head; the Colonel's eyes were following her with a sad sort of reproachful look; and she rushed out of the room.

"Oh, papa, papa, what shall I do?" said Tempy, bursting into tears, as Susy disappeared.

The streets were burning still; but Susy scarcely heeded the glare as she flew along, angry, jarred, and vexed; beside herself, she hurried on. It was not her fault, but she felt as if she had done something wrong. She no longer wondered why Tempy had looked so strange. A longing came over Susanna to feel her mother's tender arms round her.

Susy was very tired by the time she got back, and not sorry to see the old green blistered gates, and to turn out of the straight avenue into the desolate little garden, which felt more homelike than it had ever done before. Dermott's straw hat was lying on the grass; Mikey's wheelbarrow was overturned beside it; the little dog came sidling up to meet her. Nothing else appeared; the garden was silent, and had a look of desertion. The sitting-room was empty, so was the kitchen. Susy knocked at her mother's door, and called "Mamma! Dermot! Mikey!" but no one answered. In the dining-room she found a solitary plate set ready on the table with some cold meat and a cake, and some fruit in a dish; but no signs of anyone.

Denise came in from her marketing with her basket on her arm, filled

with green stalks and heads, while the girl was still standing doubtfully gazing at the preparations on the table.

"Well," says Denise, "you have found the letter? Madame laid your cover before she went off; they caught the omnibus. There is what she wrote on the stove." A note lay there with its address "Susy" in Mrs. Marney's writing. The girl had overlooked it: "Papa wants to give the little boys a treat to St. Cloud, but I dare not let them go without me; Dermv knocks up so easily, and Mikey is so wild. How I hope our kind friends may keep you, darling! I hate to think of your long lonely day. Denise has a cream cheese for your dinner, and you will find the key of the cupboard under the clock. Ever your loving Mother."

Poor Susy! It was all nothing, and yet it made her heart sink. She had been spoilt, she told herself. She had been so needed, so much made of; and now her old home wanted her no more, and her mother had never wanted her. She loved her with all tenderness; but she did not need her as some mothers need their daughters. Another day Susy might not have felt so morbid, nor had occasion to be angry with herself; to-day she was vexed with everything, with everyone, with her mother, with the Colonel, with Tempy, with herself. It was right enough and natural that Mrs. Marney should go; but a sort of lonely feeling came over Susy as she thought of it all. She had so longed for her mother all the way home; it was in vain she scolded herself, and tried to put the thought away; it came back again and again in different shapes and aspects, as persistent thoughts will do. She pictured the little family party to herself: the mother, the little boys, the father; the children's happy laughter. Then she saw another vision of the Colonel and Tempy driving off happily together in their big comfortable carriage; and then she seemed to see herself as she was, in her black gown, in the silent little garden, alone. Her fancies were cruelly vivid that night. Everything seemed touched with a bitter-sweet intensity of feeling. "It must not be," Susy told herself; and she jumped up, determined to conquer her troubles. She was glad, however, to be distracted from them, and to see Madame returning home along the garden walk.

Madame was dressed in solemn 'costume de ville.' She wore a big bonnet and veil. She carried an umbrella, and was neatly looped up in festoons.

"What, all alone?" says the little old lady. "Oh! it is not convenient—a young girl like you. I have been out to take little Marie home to her parents; but it is different at my age. Your mother she should not permit you to go alone. You shall come with me to-night. Have you seen my apartment? Come in, come in; the rooms are well-disposed, are they not?"

Madame's apartment consisted of three rooms, opening into one another, which she seemed to think a singular and admirable arrangement. There was a little ante-room where she dined; then came a salon with four big chairs in striped petticoats, and two huge vases on the

chimney filled with red and blue calico cornflowers and roses. Beyond this came the bedroom, where Madame treasured more calico bouquets, and a tall crucifix, where also stood the large bed in which she reposed, with its brown over and fringes. There was also an *armoire à glaces* she was very proud of, in which she kept her black jackets and white frilled caps, and where she now carefully enshrined her bonnet; reappearing shortly in her usual costume, and prepared for a confidential grumble—there was an endless variety to Madame's grievances—Max's iniquities, the weather, the lodgers, the extraordinary amount of rheumatism in the quartier. It was, however, some relief from Susy's own less tangible troubles. The evening was still further diversified by the appearance of two visitors, who were seen coming in at the garden gate.

"Ah! Monsieur Fayard and Mademoiselle," says Madame, well pleased; "let us go out and meet them."

The visitors were accommodated with chairs and made welcome, and presently Susy found herself one in a lively quartet. Monsieur and Mademoiselle Fayard were an old brother and sister living together. They were good-natured and kindly disposed to Susy, though Mademoiselle Fayard scanned the young lady's toilette with some severity.

"Do you wear your skirts still puckered in England?" says Mademoiselle Fayard, opening the conversation.

"Oh!" says Madame, "do you not know how eccentric the English are, my dear Seraphine?"

"How long has Mademoiselle been in Paris?" says the little old gentleman. "What does she think of it?"

"I have not seen very much of Paris yet," said Susy smiling.

"We must see to that. I mean to take her one of these days," says Madame. "There is to be a grand funeral mass at St. Philippe; we can visit the Chapelle Expiatoire on our way home."

"And Mademoiselle should see the Duke of Orleans' mortuary chapel," says Monsieur Fayard, adapting his suggestion to what he called the *serious* of the English character.

"Oh, how dull!" says Mademoiselle Fayard. "Take her to the *Magazin du Louvre*, and let her see the *Passages* and the toys in the shops; and then there are the environs—she should see the environs. There is St. Cloud; we went only last week. It is a most delightful excursion. They make music, and there is dancing too on Sundays; you go half the way in a steamer. That is where you should take her." Mademoiselle Fayard wondered why Susy blushed crimson. At that very minute the sound of a child's voice crying was heard in the distance.

"Ah! there is mamma at last," said Susy, starting up and running down to the gate; and as she reached it a little group appeared in the opening, as footsore, as weary as anybody could expect to be after a long day's hard pleasuring. Little Mikey was in tears. Susy had recognised the familiar wail. Little Dermv was in his mother's arms, and the poor woman herself seemed scarcely able to stand.

"Here we are," she said wearily; "Mikey has been a wild boy. He has been naughty all the way home; Dermý has been a darling, but he is tired out. You missed nothing, Susy; it has been hot and tiring. I can't think what possessed Marney to start off on such an expedition. We went in the steamer, and dined at St. Cloud. I wished myself home all the way. Will sister find the boys some bread and milk? they must get to bed at once."

"No! no! no!" says Mikey dolefully; "I won't go to bed. I haven't given sister my flowers yet."

"Well, child, make haste and give them," says the poor, tired-out mother. And Mikey holds up his little hot hand, in which he has been tightly clutching for hours past the bunch of clover and dandelions which he had got for Susy.

"Thank you, dear little brother," says Susy, catching him up in her arms.

Mrs. Marney sat on the bedside, undressing the children, while Susy brought up the supper for them.

"We walked all the way from the boat," says Mrs. Marney; "I thought I should never get home. Marney went off with some friends."

"Why did you not take a carriage, mamma?" said Susy.

"Marney had got my purse, dear," said her mother. "Stand still, do, Mikey! while I untie the strings; and Dermý, drink up the nice milk, there is an angel. Is it boiled?—never mind, my pet, it will do you good."

"Do the angels drink boiled milk?" says Dermý in tears.

"Always," says Mrs. Marney with much conviction. Then the little tired boys are tucked up in bed, and lie side by side with dark eyes following their mother as she comes and goes, folding their clothes, putting one thing and another away. Mikey drops off to sleep first, then Dermý's eyelids fall; and Mrs. Marney takes the light and leaves the room.

"How tired you are, mamma! Can't I sit up and let Mr. Marney in?" said Susy, as she followed her mother downstairs. She was almost frightened by the way Mrs. Marney suddenly answered: "Certainly not; that is for me to do, not for you. I shall hear him. Good-night, my dear;" and she folded her in her arms, as if to make up for her vexed tone.

And so at last Susy felt her mother's arms about her; but she was not comforted now. She could not speak to her of all that had occurred. She could not understand all that was happening; she felt chilled and lonely; she had so longed to be at home with her mother, and she had reached the place she longed to be in, and there was her mother; but it was hardly home. She went to her room, and undressed, and lay down in her little creaking bed with a confused impression of something that she must put away from her mind—of something, of many things, the Colonel's reproachful look, and Temy's angry stare. Had she been unkind to him? He had been so good, so wonderfully good to her; and so at last she fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE DAWN.

EVERYTHING was very homely in the bare little room, and quiet as the peaceful slumbers of its young inmate. Her work lay folded on a chair; her black cloak hung against the wall; the nosegay her little brother had picked for her was in a glass upon the window-sill; the window was half open to the garden that looked gold and grey and chill in the faint keen dawn. The shadows heaped in the corner began to tremble as the faint light came creeping quietly. The round eye of the little looking-glass seemed to twinkle and wink; the light spread from ridge to ridge, it reached the gilt crown above the bed at last, which seemed to awaken and to give out faint thrills of light.

Susy lay sleeping, unconscious of it all, and dreaming of the tranquil orthodoxies of her past. The present was too strange and new as yet to dream of. Her mother's face seemed the only familiar thing in its tangled perplexities. There is a picture of "Sleeping St. Barbara," by Paul Veronese, in the National Gallery, which is not unlike Susy as she was then. The angel appears bearing the cross, and the maiden dreams on with a peaceful countenance, not afraid of that which is before her. So lay Susy, unconscious and tranquil. With the first faint streak of daylight some birds began to awaken in the garden with faint stirrings and chirps; then came a far-away knocking that reached the girl in her dreams as from some other world. Then she started up suddenly, confused; she had heard a step on the gravel just outside her window which roused her. She sat up in bed and listened; everything was very still, very serene; she could see the garden through the half open window—it seemed asleep still, though the birds in the tree tops were waking. A few white stars were throbbing through the dawning mists.

Susy was confused; when she awoke, some feeling was in her mind that she must get up and let in the person who was waiting outside. Perhaps her mother was asleep, tired out, and had not heard the summons.

She jumped up, wrapping herself in her warm dressing-gown, and slipping on her red slippers. There was light enough for her to grope her way; she opened the door, and came to the head of the stairs and looked over. The little staircase led down by a single flight to the front door; and, as Susy stood leaning over the bannisters, she saw a figure carrying a light and cautiously descending, and with sudden relief (for she had been vaguely frightened) she saw that it was her mother. Mrs. Marney was dressed, and she was cautiously unlocking and unbarring the bolts of the door. As it flew open it let in a rush of cool keen air, and then out of the sweet morning, with its thousand delicate scents and fragrances, through the tender light breaking so suddenly into the darkened house, came a figure slouching and heavy-footed, reeling as it

advanced—a dark, forbidding figure that Susanna might have fled from had she met it in some lonely place.

She heard her mother whisper, "Oh, Michael!" and then it seemed to her the heavy eyes were raised and met hers. There came a dull thick utterance—an oath. "Are you both watching me? D—— you, is not one enough?" said the voice; and then Susy saw an upraised hand, and heard the sound of a heavy blow and a low suppressed cry.

The girl started forward. She ran half down the stairs, and stood with the dawn in her face like some avenging angel.

"How dare you," she cried out incoherently; but at that moment she met her mother's appealing glance, and saw the poor hands held up with an entreating sign.

There is some strange intuition which flashes quicker than words or even than looks; and as Susanna stood there, shivering with passionate anger, she felt somehow that her mother's one longing, agonised wish was that she should not interfere.

"Go, please, darling," reached her in a whisper. For a moment she stood scarcely able to obey, and then with a great effort she turned slowly away; but she could scarcely stand as she went back into her own room, and sank down upon her bed and hid her face.

Such horror, such indignity had never entered into her mind before. The quiet home in which she had lived hitherto had been far removed from such terrors as these. In the holy commonplace of her past life the possibility of such misery as this had not occurred to her; and now the wretched secret was hers, and now Susy knew why she hated her step-father.

The dawn turned into day. Susy still sat there; she was shivering, but she did not know it; the door opened at last, but she did not look up; some one came in.

"Are you not gone back to bed, Susy?" said her mother in a faint sharp voice. "It will not help me much if you make yourself ill." Then, melting suddenly: "My poor darling! my poor child, I would have hidden it from you if I could," she said. "He is not often so, dear, and I'm used to his ways; and oh, Susanna!" said the poor thing, "there's many a worse man than my poor Michael, with all his faults. You are my own child; but you are not his, and you can't understand how long I have loved him."

Poor Susy! what could she say? Every word her mother spoke sank into her heart; it did not lessen her loyal trust and tender fealty, but it made her feel more and more as if they were apart.

"Lie down, child," her mother went on, "and let me cover you over."

And Susy, suddenly yielding and obeying like a child, and feeling by instinct that this was best, did as she was bid, and lay down and let her mother cover her over warm. What could she say? what could she do? The little room was alight by this; the birds were in full song, a distant roll of wheels had begun. There was a sound of people stirring about,

Mrs. Marney went to the window and drew the curtain across to dim the light; then she came back and sat by the girl's bedside; and Susy, worn out, fell asleep at last, still holding her mother's hand, and by doing so comforted her more than by any words or tender devotion. The poor much-tried woman's heart swelled with tender maternal pride as she sat watching by the girl. Scheme after scheme passed through her mind, as she sat by Susy's bedside. Tenderly as she loved her, she longed for her girl to go from them. What chance of happiness could there be for Susy in this sad home? For herself at least there existed a reality that carried her through its trials; but for Susy what interest could there be?

Mary Marney was not a bad woman, she was not a very good one; she would do a friend a good turn, she would pluck the feathers from her bleeding breast for Michael and the children. When she sent her Susan away for the first time it was with anguish in her heart; but it seemed to her that it was best. And now again she could not bear to see her child unwelcome; she could not endure the thought of her Susanna watching day by day that which she herself would fain conceal even from herself, learning little by little the whole miserable gamut of a life such as Marney's. The girl's presence seemed to drive him to wilder courses, to irritate him. He seemed scarcely himself at times; or was it that, with Susanna looking on, Mary could the less easily blind herself to the life which Marney was leading?

Then Mrs. Marney thought of the Colonel, of his kindness, of his friendliness, of his comfortable home and good connections. Ah! if only she could see her Susy safely landed in such a home! She slipped her hand softly away from the young loving clasp, and crept from the room, closing the door very softly. The girl did not awaken till late in the day, when some burst of military music from the high road recalled her to life and sunshine and the sorrow of the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTERWARDS.

BREAKFAST WAS on the table when Susanna came in, looking very pale, and dressed in her black gown. To her relief her stepfather was not there. She did not dare look at her mother at first; and Mrs. Marney, too, avoided the girl's looks.

"I have put your coffee to keep warm by the kitchen fire," said Mrs. Marney. "Dermy, go, like a good boy, and fetch sister Susy's coffee. I shall be very angry if you spill it."

"Let me go too," says Mikey, starting up.

"Mikey, don't be naughty," says his mother, absently and as a matter of course; and Mikey takes this for permission, and off go the little pair. They came back in a minute, with a rocking coffee cup balanced between them.

Susy sat down to her breakfast. Once she raised her eyes to look at her mother, but they filled with tears; and she had to keep them fixed upon her plate, for fear the children should see and make some remark. In that one glance she had seen, to her surprise, that Mrs. Marney looked much as usual, only a little flushed and harsh in manner.

"Now, boys, go and fetch your father's coffee," said Mary a second time as the door opened, and Marney came in. She spoke in her usual voice. Marney certainly did not look as usual. He was not shaved, his handsome face was blurred, he had an odd bloodshot look in his eyes. Susanna turned her head away.

It is an awful thing to hate another person; and poor Susy, so gentle, so yielding, felt as if she hated Marney with an indescribable loathing.

"Well, my fair Susy," said he, attempting an uneasy familiarity, and, seeing that Susy did not answer, "Mary, my head aches," said Marney, and flung himself into a chair that stood by an open window.

"Stopping at home is the best thing to cure the headache, Michael," said his wife, with a sigh. She began putting his breakfast things ready, using one hand only.

One of the children started up and caught her by the other arm. Mrs. Marney shrank back.

"Take care," said Susy, involuntarily, with a glance at her stepfather, "you hurt her."

"It's my rheumatism," said Mary, hastily; then looking at Susanna, she said imploringly, "Go, darling, tell Denise I am coming."

Susy started up. She had to pass close to her stepfather, and as she passed she unconsciously pulled her dress so that it should not touch him.

Marney looked at his wife with an odd fixed glance. "Did you see that?" said he. "What have you been whining to her about?"

"Do you suppose I would complain to her?" said Mrs. Marney.

"You can, if you like," rejoined he, sulkily. "When is that old fool of a colonel coming to the point?"

Mr. Marney sat turning over his day's politics. The little boys were building an impregnable castle with their bricks. Susy was standing in the little kitchen, by the furnace where the family meals were cooked. Her mother came in, looking for her; she had been more frightened by the girl's scared looks than by Marney's fiercest outbursts. Susy went up to her mother, and put her two arms tight round her neck. "Oh, mamma! mamma! I have been thinking. O couldn't you come away with me, and bring the little boys? I will work for you day and night. Only come! Only come!"

"Ah! my child," said her mother. "Do not say such things. How can I come? I have chosen my own life; I must abide by it. You too must live your life. You might be a happy woman, and help us all," said her mother, looking fixedly at her. "And make another person very happy—that dear, good Colonel Dymond, who worships the ground you stand on. Michael saw it from the first."

"Hush! mamma," said Susy deeply wounded. "Can *you*, of all people, urge me to marry? Oh! forgive me," she hastily added, seeing her mother's pained look, and that her eyes were full of tears.

"Promise me at least, Susy, that you will not refuse him without reflection," said her mother, wistfully.

"He said something yesterday," Susy answered, "I don't know what, nor do I care. For it is you, mamma, whom I live for. I will even bear with my stepfather," Susy added faltering, and looking through the open door towards the adjoining room, "if it makes you happier."

"No, no, no! it will not make me happier," cried the poor woman, torn between her two hearts. "You must live your own life, my child, not mine. I hoped you would never have found it out. It is not the same to me as to you. We make it up," she said, with a pitiful smile. "Sometimes he has forgotten all about it in the morning. The children are accustomed to our ways; you are used to other things. You are my own child; but you are not his, and you cannot understand how long we have loved each other."

Susy stood strangely silent, watching her mother with dry, wondering eyes. Each word smote her; but her fealty was not shaken. The poor child's heart was full of pain; it seemed so hard, so very hard, to leave that dear, bent head to bear its burden alone, and yet Susy felt that her mother was speaking the truth.

"I will try and think of some plan," she said faintly, and as she spoke the brick castle fell over with a crash in the adjoining sitting-room; Denny began to cry; Mr. Marney called out, "Mother! mother!" and Mrs. Marney hastily turned and ran across the passage in through the open door. Susy also passed out into the passage, and then hurried aimlessly into the garden.

It was a lovely day; everything was shining, and yet everything seemed to ache, from the long, green grass at her feet to the sky above; the poplar trees shivered; the nasturtiums looked desolate. Susy, as she went by, saw Madame at her window making signs. It seemed to Susy as if she was a person looking on at a dream. Was it also a dream that she was alone—that no being in the whole world wanted her or needed her? She only brought trouble upon every one. The Colonel looked at her with reproach; even Tempy shrank from her. The girl had come aimlessly along the shaded avenue which ran by the palings that divided the villa garden from the road; the lilacs grew thick on either side, and their dark green foliage beneath the blue made leafy walls to the little path.

As she hurried along she nearly ran up against a strange young man, with a long nose and twinkling eyes, who looked at her curiously and compassionately as she passed. She scarcely saw him, and yet this stranger, as strangers sometimes do, knew the whole story of her troubles. He had come by chance stumbling into the secret of poor Mrs. Marney's sorrowful life—the secret she would have hidden from her

nearest and dearest. He had returned by some midnight train; reached home at dawn; come out into the garden, hearing Marney's step. He had looked on for a moment at the tragedy; heard the blow fall; hesitated, and while he hesitated the door shut—the tipsy man staggered into the house. It was nothing to him, and yet the actors interested him, as actors do interest those who having seen them stirred by great passions and events now recognise them as they pass by quietly. The young man watched Susy as she brushed past, and walked towards the house again. Madame du Parc was still at her window. "My son is come! He arrive last night," shouts the old lady. "'Ave you seen him in the avenue?"

Susanna shook her head; she could not speak. She turned aside, like a poor little hunted hare, to the sitting-room window which was open. Some one called her; the little boys came scampering to meet her; the little dog flew out barking. "Here she is," said her mother's voice. "Ah! Susy, here is a good friend who has come to see you. We have been speaking of you. Dear child, listen to what he has got to say." It seemed all like some awakening from a miserable dream.

The Colonel, with his neat hat and umbrella, was standing by the window. Marney was gone. Mrs. Marney, who looked as if she had been crying, was sitting smiling in the big arm-chair. As the Colonel turned to meet Susanna, he was quite shocked by the scared expression of her face, by the black lines under her eyes. A flush came into his yellow cheeks, and his looks became very wide and bright. Then he came up to her and said very simply, "My dear, your mother and I have been talking of something very near my heart. Susy, I am an old fellow; but you know me and you know my children, and if you could make up your mind to love me a little, and to come to be my wife, I think I am sure I could make you happy. Your mother consents, and says she could trust you to me."

"Indeed! indeed! Susy, I could trust you to him," cried the poor woman eagerly. "I could be happy, if I felt you safe in such hands. Ah! darling, if it were only for my sake!"

"You must not influence her," gravely interrupted the Colonel. He seemed quite clever suddenly to Susy, and able to understand everything—every shade of feeling. "It would be a cruel mistake for Susy to marry me, or anybody else, unless she could do it for her own sake, and because she thought she could be happy. I dare not think what it would be to me and mine if we could hope to make her so."

Susanna, in her black dress, stood in the centre of the room, facing the two who wished her so well. She was still holding a sprig of ivy she had gathered. She seemed scarcely to see what was before her, or to be understanding what was happening; but it was not so. She was living too intensely to give much sign of what was in her mind. She looked from her mother, with the anxious, speaking eyes, to the kind face of the time-worn man who loved her. She had never till this

moment realised the selfish, human, irrepressible happiness of being another person's happiness. What strange experience the last few hours had brought! She seemed suddenly to have come into shelter, after being in a great storm or battle. An hour ago she had been alone in all the world, her heart had seemed almost dead, and now she was alone no longer, and her heart was beating so that she could scarcely breathe. Then a more practical vision crossed her mind, of bills paid, of Mikey and Dermie at school, of her mother's mind at ease.

Colonel Dymond waiting for her to speak, thought that her silence lasted a very long time. "Susy!" he said, almost shyly. Something in his voice touched her—it seemed natural and familiar. She was very young, she was easily touched, easily made grateful. It seemed so natural to say Yes, and to put her future into this good friend's keeping. What this future contained—where it might lead her in its onward course—she knew not. She accepted the present with a true heart, and with a faith and loving conviction, which did not grow less as time went on.

Heroines of Spenser.

SPENSER's manner of portraiture differs much from that of Chaucer, whom he names his poetical master. Ambling Canterburyward, with his eyes on the ground, the earlier poet could steal sprightly glances at every member of the cavalcade—glances which took in the tuft of hairs upon the Miller's nose, the sparkle of pins in the Friar's tippet, and the smooth forehead and little rosy mouth of Madam Eglantine. We should know the Wife of Bath, if we met her, by the wide-parted teeth, the dulness of hearing, the bold laugh, the liberal tongue; we should expect to see the targelike hat, the scarlet stockings, and the shining shoes. Spenser's gaze dwelt longer on things, in a more passive luxury of sensation or with reverence more devout. His powers of observation are, as it were, dissolved in his sense of beauty, and this again is taken up into his moral idealism and becomes a part of it. To Chaucer a beautiful woman is a beautiful creature of this good earth, and is often nothing more; her beauty suddenly slays the tender heart of her lover, or she makes glad the spirit of man as though with some light, bright wine. She is more blissful to look on than "the new perjonette tree," and softer than the wether's wool; her mouth is sweet as "apples laid in hay or heath;" her body is gent and small as any weasel. For Spenser behind each woman made to worship or to love rises a sacred presence—womanhood itself. Her beauty of face and limb is but a manifestation of the invisible beauty, and this is of one kin with the Divine Wisdom and the Divine Love. In the poet of Edward's reign a gay and familiar side of chivalry is presented, which existed in life and in art and literature along with that chivalry which was the mysticism of human passion. The more modern poet retains of chivalry only what is exalted, serious, and tender. While heartily a man of his own Elizabethan age—a Protestant age, an age of awakening science, of a high mundane spirit—Spenser does not break with the past. He does not, like Cervantes, with remorseful mockery bid farewell to romance and knight-errantry. Don Quixote, dying, begs pardon of his honest squire for perverting his understanding and persuading him to the folly of chivalric adventure; he had been mad, now he is sane, and is once again Alonzo Quixano the Good. For Spenser knightly warfare against evil was still the rule of heroic manhood; the champions of the great Queen must all be knights-errant; there were giant oppressors to overthrow, there were deceivers of men to unmask, there were captive lands and causes to succour; nor could a time ever come when truth and justice, and purity and gentleness, would

not be at odds with evil and untamed forces in our own hearts within and in the broad world without.

Spenser retained for the uses of the Renaissance the moral idealism of chivalry, and he renewed and recreated this ; for Spenser's chivalry is one which has made acquaintance with the robust energies of his own time, with the hearty morality of the Reformed faith, and also with the broad and well-based thoughts of the great master of ethical philosophy. What England of the Renaissance needed most, Spenser declared, was noble character in man and woman. The most worshipful and lovely things this earth could show were, in his eyes, a true English gentleman and a true English lady ; these, Spenser said, were actually to be found in Elizabethan England. He had known Sidney ; he knew Sidney's sister—

Urania, sister unto Astrofell,
In whose brave mind, as in a golden cofer,
All heavenly gifts and riches locked are.

There were others no less praiseworthy, and among them his own three kinswomen, of whom one afterwards, in majestic old age, seemed to the youthful Milton equal to Latona or the towered Cybele,

Mother of a hundred gods.

These Spenser had seen and known. But in Elizabeth's Court he had found also much that repelled him—spurious gentry, aristocratic barbarism, vulgar pleasures, ignoble ambition and ignoble ease, wantonness misnaming itself love, the bark of slander, the bite of envy. He had experienced the anxieties, the disappointments, the humiliations of one who is a seeker for preferment. Then came a time when he could look at these things—both the evil and the good—from a distance, when his imagination could deal with them in its own mode of serene ardour and could shape them to their ideal forms. To have a part in the ragged commonwealth of Ireland appeared to Spenser to be nothing less than banishment. Ireland was to him a savage soil ; yet, for one of his temper, solitude must have been better than the close shouldering of the press ; Mulla, rippling below her alders, must have been more musical than the salutations of sycophants ; the Irish air, the lights and shadows, the bright veil of rain, the tender luminousness of morning and evening, the grey mountain Mole, must have made up a surrounding for Spenser more open and fresh than the antichamber where importunate suitors are bid to wait.

Two qualities of Spenser's genius have made the *Faerie Queene* a poem, and saved it from becoming a frigid moral allegory or a mere masque of the fancy : one was his delight in sensuous beauty, the other his delight in lovely and heroic human character. He was, fortunately, a man of the Renaissance. At whatever period of the world's history Spenser might have been born he would have been born a lover of all that is pleasant and comely to the senses ; but had he been a man of the

Middle Ages it is possible that his moral earnestness might have set itself to do battle with his senses; for his garlands of flowers he might have given us only some pale lily or a palm; his dreams of fair women might have come to him only as troublous and torturing visions. Had Spenser been of Milton's party in the times of civil war, he, like Milton, must needs have parted with the youthful *allegrezza*; but he could not, like Milton, have found a higher self in such naked moral sublimity as that of the *Samson Agonistes*; defrauded of his love of sensuous beauty, Spenser would have been cut off from one, and that a large, affluent of his spiritual inspiration. For beauty, Spenser maintained, is twofold. There is beauty which is a mere pasture for the eye; it is a spoil for which we grow greedy; as we gaze on it we sink in waves of deep delight; it leaves us faint with too much luxury of heart. And there is the higher beauty of which the peculiar quality is a penetrating radiance; it illuminates all that comes into its presence; it is a beam from the Divine Fount of Light; it lifts up the soul of man out of the mire of this world; it pierces him with a sacred joy; it animates him to pure and passionate endeavour.

Spenser's moral idealism and his exquisite sense of beauty met, and became inseparably involved. His moral idealism concerned itself not solely or chiefly about abstract qualities, though with these it also had dealings; its most appropriate objects were found in ideal human characters. Had Spenser thought only of qualities, and had he set his imagination to exhibit these in allegory, the *Faerie Queene* would have been one long masquelike procession, as visionary as that which passes before the eyes of Britomart in the enchanter's chamber. And there are many masques and masquelike figures in Spenser's poems; even Despair, and Mammon, and Care, figures so marked by Spenser's peculiar genius, may be classed with these. There are times, again, when his genius wholly deserts him, and we get abstractions bald and bare, or tricked out with some antic garb which is too ill-fitting or too ragged to cover their nakedness. But Spenser's most admirable poetical creations are not masquerading qualities, well or ill attired, but ideal characters of man and woman; the moral allegory finds its play in and through the epic persons. Sir Calidore and Pastorella are as truly a gallant youth and a shepherdess queen of curds and cream as are the charming boy and girl lovers of the *Winter's Tale*. When Wordsworth would name two personal themes gained from books—from books around which our happiness may twine with tendrils strong as flesh and blood—he chooses one from the plays of Shakspeare—Desdemona—and the second is the Una of Spenser.

Spenser's manner of portraiture seems to be at its best in female figures. "The perfection of woman," said Coleridge, "is to be characterless," meaning that no single prominent quality, however excellent, can equal in beauty and excellence a well-developed, harmonious nature. The creator of Una, and Amoret, and Florimell loved also this harmony

of character, and he found it, or believed he found it, more in woman than in man. While each of the heroines of the *Faerie Queene* has distinction, so that Una little resembles Belphebe and Britomart is far removed from Pastorella, each possesses in her own kind that perfection of womanhood which Coleridge praised and loved. Spenser's great knights strive with outward enemies—giant, or dragon, or Saracen, or enchanter—and sometimes these stand in the allegory for actual external difficulties and dangers; but in many instances we discover presently that they are indeed inward enemies, bosom foes given externality in order to carry on the action of the poem. And so the unity of personal character is broken by the allegory; one piece of a man's nature hypostatized is set over against another; inward division of heart is represented by a hurtling of champion against champion. But this is not the case with Spenser's women. They are not parcelled out into fragments. To fortune, evil and good, they are exposed—that fortune behind and above which, according to the faith of Spenser, a Divine Providence for ever lives and works—but they do not suffer inward disruption. If Una be made captive to Sansloy, she only endures a hardship at the hands of fate; she remains faithful and true, and needs no chastening, but rather comforting. If the Red Cross Knight be thrown into Orgoglio's dungeon, it signifies that he is a traitor to his better self; holiness has become infected with pride, and the scourge and fasting of Dame Cœlia's house will be needed for his restoration. Hence while Spenser's knights at times lapse back from persons into qualities, his chief female figures are always the female figures of an epic of romance. The allegory often does little more with respect to them than determine the leading feature in the character of each, or select the group of women from which each shall be singled as an ideal type. It is true they do not possess the interest given by complex elements of character; but if they are simple they are also complete. They rejoice, they sorrow; fears and hopes play through the life blood in their cheeks; they are tender, indignant, pensive, ardent; they know the pain and the bliss of love; they are wise with the lore of purity, and loyalty, and fortitude. Even in dramatic poetry our interest in character does not depend solely on the number of elements which go to form it. The beauty of perfect poise, of coherence, and of flawless vitality charms us. If it were not so Miranda might disappear from the *Tempest* and Perdita from the *Winter's Tale*. They exhibit none of the iridescent moods of a Cleopatra; they are not waves of the sea, but children of the grave, sweet mother Earth; and the imagination finds as endless a satisfaction in their bright purity and singleness of being as the eye finds in some blossom's radiant life and mystery of unmingled loveliness.

Spenser's landscape is in harmony with his figures, possessing a portion, as it were, of feminine beauty. His Faerie Land is such a country as Gloriana might have created for her own empire. Something is derived here from Italian poetry, in particular from Ariosto, but

something also from Spenser's own genius. The elements of his landscape are few; he returns to them often, and dwells upon them with inexhaustible delight. The objects and aspects of external nature which impress us as sublime were to Spenser, as to the other poets of his time, not sublime, but dreadful. The roaring wilderness of waters appals him; he had watched the billows in the Irish sounds charging one another like angry rivals; it was a happiness when his foot touched English earth again. Spenser had found his Rosalind in the North Country—Rosalind "the widow's daughter of the glen." But we cannot imagine Spenser exulting in the barren grandeur of a North Country moor; it was natural that Colin Clout should come south, to lead his flocks among the dales of Kent.* What the poet of Faerie Land especially loves are those select spots devised by nature for delight, sacred and secure, where nature, as it were, vies with art, and where men in instinctive gratitude would fain build an altar on the green sward to the mild genius of the place. To such a sylvan retreat the wounded Timias is conveyed by the damsels of Belphebe. It is a glade environed by mountains and mighty woods, forming an amphitheatre in their midst; a little river plays over its gleaming gravel; in the myrtles and laurels the birds are uttering

Many a lovely lay

Of God's high praise and of their love's sweet teen.

In such a place, or one still fairer, Calidore beheld the hundred naked maidens, lily white, dancing in a circle, and within their circle those three handmaidens of Venus, the Graces; and yet again enclosed and garlanded by their loveliness Spenser's own bride, Elizabeth, set like

A precious gem

Amidst a ring most richly well enchased.

Around are woods of matchless height, and all the trees are trees of honour; a little hill rises from the grassy plain; at the foot a gentle flood tumbles its silver waves, "unmarred with ragged moss or filthy mud," and on the summit is the plain where the dancers dance and Colin pipes. Even in denser forest, though there is danger of violence and lurking foes, all is not horror; the wild wood creatures are not all like those who would sacrifice and devour their beauteous prey, Serena; there are also tribes docile and prone to an untrained fidelity, like those who, grinning gently, bend the knees backward to Una, or like the salvage man who fawns upon Serena—

Kissing her hands and grovelling to the ground,

For other language had he none, nor speech,

But a soft murmur and confused sound

Of senseless love.

* Does the Celtic word "glen" occur in English poetry before Spenser? His friend E. K., annotating the *Shepherd's Calendar*, explains it as "a country hamlet or borough," misunderstanding the word, for Spenser uses it again (*Faerie Queene*, b. iii. c. 7, st. 6) where Florimell finds the witch's cottage in a "gloomy glen," certainly not in a "country hamlet or borough."

The native haunt of evil, as Spenser imagined it, is a cave; there it lurks and shuns the light. Spenser hates darkness and foulness and the close damp of the den; and escape from imprisonment into the sunshine, or from the sick room into the outer world, is felt by him as an exquisite pleasure. Calpine goes forth, when recovered from his wound, "to take the air and hear the thrush's song;" the witch's son escapes with his snow lady from the smoky cottage to pass the idle time "in the open freshness of the gentle air." Creatures who do not love the sun and breeze must needs be very sad or very sinful. In a cave lies coiled the feminine serpent Error; the den is loathsome and in a covert place, where light seems uncouth and the glistering of St. George's armour infuses hatred and alarm. In a cave dwells the ragged wretch Despair—

Far underneath a craggy cliff ypyght,
Dark, doleful, dreary, like a greedy grave.

In a delve hard by the cavernous entrance to hell sits Mammon, sunning his antique treasure. And the much-afflicted Malbecco, goatish old husband to the wanton Hellenore, escaped from his pursuers at last, runs to earth where a buttress of rock hangs dreadfully over the sea; there, under the ever-threatening crag, above the ever-thundering billow, he creeps into the narrow cave, and, forgetting that he was man, knows himself and is known thenceforward as Jealousy.

In the legend of St. George, as accepted by artists of the Middle Ages, the virgin Cleodolinda, the Andromeda of Christian mythology, is about to die, when the warrior, now riding forward to join his legion, perceives her distress, rescues her, and slays the dragon. Spenser recasts the legend: Una is never exposed to the monster; she devotes herself to the delivery of her parents, and the part which she plays in the adventure is far from being a passive one. To her the champion of her cause owes the sword which fights her battle, and hope, and courage, and forgiveness, and love, and even life itself. Before her arrival he seems but a clownish young man among the splendid personages of Gloriana's Court; it is Una who brings him his great charger and the silver shield. Throughout Spenser's poem, although Una is so young, so tender, so mild, while the knight is stout and bold, there is a certain protectiveness on her part towards him; yet this is united in such a way with gentle, fervid loyalty and trust that it seems to imply no consciousness of superiority. St. George is not yet delivered from the cloud of youthful ignorance and unpurged passion: in his courage there is something of mere "greedy hardiment;" in his indignation against evil there is too little care to distinguish the innocent from the guilty; in his sorrow for wrong-doing there is some of that lax self-pity which prefers the easy way of despair and death to the hardness of strenuous discipline. But Una has already known the good and evil things of life. She first recognises the peril of the Wandering Wood, yet the knight being once pledged to encounter with the serpent of the cavern, she would not have him draw back; she is

aware that no half-measures will serve in such a struggle with Error, and heartens St. George to the desperate effort.

Now, now, Sir Knight, show what ye be;
Add faith unto your force, and be not faint;
Strangle her, else she fain will strangle thee.

And when this first victory has been achieved the eager approach and joyous greeting of his lady fill the weary knight with new strength, so that she has now to warn him that before new adventure rest is needful, and refreshment, and the wise counsel of the night. As she would utterly destroy the evil creature of the Wandering Wood, so when at length the enchantress Duessa, the deceiver of her lord, is overthrown, Una shows no weakness of false pity. Her lord's feeble cry comes to her from the dungeon when no one else has heard it, and the wrath of Una, pure and innocent as her own lamb, is unflinching as that wrath of the Lamb of which we read elsewhere.

Well begun; end all so well, I pray!
Ne let that wicked woman 'scape away.

Duessa is not slain, but all her loathsomeness of body is laid bare; this Una decrees, and her knight must look upon the withered hag whom he had taken to himself in Una's place; after that let her deceive him if she can. But before St. George endures the pain and shame which are needful Una has already taken him to her heart, with only tears for his piteous aspect and no word of reproach except against the evil star which had wronged his truer self.

Whom when his lady saw, to him she ran
With hasty joy: to see him made her glad,
And sad to view his visage pale and wan,
Who erst in flowers of freshest youth was clad.
Then, when her well of tears she wasted had,
She said, "Ah, dearest lord, what evil star
On you hath frowned and poured his influence bad,
That of yourself ye thus berobbed are
And this misseeming hue your manly looks doth mar?"

Yet another subtle and dangerous enemy the young knight meets before his trial of strength with the dragon. The strange fascination which resides in the words of Despair has laid its spell upon his soul; his eye broods on the dull waters of death; his resolution ebbs; he is tending heavily to the grave; the dagger is in his trembling hand. For one moment Una feels the blood run cold to her heart, and she is on the point of swooning; the next she snatches away the accursed knife, with courageous words which strive for the desperate man's sake to be reproachful.

Come, come away, frail, feeble, fleshly wight;
Ne let vain words bewitch thy manly heart.

In Dame Cœlia's house Una is indeed happy. The reverent matron cherishes her; she is as a sister among the three comely daughters; and

she knows that joy so dear to a woman's heart of acting as an earthly Providence to her lover, of fashioning him in ways after her mind, and of anticipating in her spiritual child some of the delights of motherhood, while she watches him grow daily in thews and stature, in all the cardinal virtues and all the Christian graces. His rueful shrieks and groanings come to her when Patience displeases him with the iron whip, and Una writhes under the torment as if it were her own; but it is wholesome for him to endure, and she bears all wisely and patiently. At last the scourgings, and nippings, and prickings, and smartings are over; St. George is brought to her clean and sound, the son of her tears and prayers; he is her very own, and now with sweet complacency she kisses him, praying him to cherish himself and partake once more of gladness.

Una can endure joy as she can sorrow. Her joy is never a blinding bliss of life; it has in it a reasonableness and sweet sobriety. When Arthur overthrows her adversary the royal maid comes running fast to greet his victory, "with sober gladness and mild modesty." Yet this perfect poise of joy has nothing of languor in it; she sees life steadily and sees it whole, and, therefore, she carries some of the sunshine into shady places, and in her elation there is a touch of sadness. On her betrothal morning Una comes forth as fair and fresh as the freshest flower in May; she is clothed in a robe all lily white, more pure and less proud than silk or silver; her sad wimple is thrown aside, and her face has in it the radiance of the morning; yet at this most wished-for moment Una's gladness is wisely tempered and serious.

Then forth he called that his daughter fair,
The fairest Una, his only daughter dear,
His only daughter and his only heir;
Who forth proceeding with sad, sober cheer,
As bright as doth the morning star appear
Out of the East, with flaming locks bedight,
To tell that dawning day is drawing near,
And to the world does bring long-wished light;
So fair and fresh that lady showed herself in sight.

But joy of any kind, unless it reside in the consciousness of loving duty done, is rare with Una, and, for all her strength of endurance and of affection, she is a frail and tender being, exposed to the roughest buffetings of fortune. By nothing is Spenser so impassioned (to use a word of his own) as by the sight of woman in undeserved distress; the chivalrous fire kindles about his heart; wrath, and remorse, and love make him their own. And Una is for ever passing from calamity to calamity. The brightness of her aspect is that of a face very white and calm; she veils herself and wears the mourning stole in token of her sorrow; when she has laid aside the veil we see the clear shining of her beauty most often through tears. The lion forgets his rage in her presence, but the fealty of her wild champion brings a pang to the lady's heart, for it reminds her of her own lionlike lord, who has fled away from her. Then, after her manner of shunning violences of feeling, she compels herself to be calm, "in

close heart shutting up her grief." Once more, when night comes in the miserable cottage of Abessa, her sorrow breaks its bounds, and once more at morning she is ready to resume her labours. The day brings only deception, and wrong, and anguish. Archimago, disguised as her own knight, rides towards her, and Una, in glad yet timid humility, approaches him, and presently taking heart, dares to greet him with happier welcome. Then comes the discovery of the old enchanter's fraud and bare escape from the violent hands of the Saracen. Among the kindly salvage tribe Una enjoys a short breathing-time, and resting her over-worn heart is yet not idle; she is a teacher to the barbarous people of the gentle lore of Christ. When rescued from the woods, grief begins anew with the false tidings of St. George's death; the lady is so downcast that she cannot for sorrow keep pace with her protector, Satyrane. A second escape from the Paynim follows, and a second time assurance reaches her of her lord's death; for is not this the dwarf who hastens towards her bearing the masterless spear and shield? Una sinks from deep swoon to swoon; and then, when her case is almost desperate, the strong comfort reaches her of Prince Arthur's presence, and his reasonable words, which she, putting away her passion of grief, reasonably ponders and receives. Even the joy of her betrothal day is not unmingled with pain; the last guileful shaft of her adversary has still to be shot; with "sober countenance" Una confronts Archimago and unmasks his lie. At last she touches the whole of happiness, touches it and no more; she is made one with him who from the first had been dearer to her than the light of day, and almost at the same time she is divided from him. The Faerie champion must depart to accomplish other commands of Queen Gloriana, and Una is left to mourn.

In all save purity of heart Belphebe presents a contrast to Una, and even her purity of heart is of a different kind. Una's love towards her chosen knight has in it something of the nature of celestial grace; all earthly ardour of love is transfigured in the white radiance of her soul—transfigured, but present. Belphebe's passion is that of virginal joy, and pride, and freedom. She thinks of love for no man and from none, whether to give or to take; it is enough to have victorious play among the woodland beasts, and, Dian-like, to rest in the company of her maidens. In happy hour we first see her, for as she starts suddenly to view from among the green boughs, following hard upon the prelude of her ringing horn, we have almost grown ashamed of manhood in company of the despicable braggart and his squire. She is clad in hunter's weed, and moves a goddess; her face is clear as the sky, not with such luminous pallor as that of Una, but with the flush of health and gallant exercise; a breeze and breath of life, "able to heal the sick and to revive the dead," play around her as they might around some flourishing tree; her eyes beam like two living lamps "under the shadow of her even brows;" her ivory forehead is a broad table for Love to engrave his triumphs on; her lips are incarnadined with the quickened blood; her words make silver

music in the air. Una had worn the veil and mourning stole. Belphebe is clad in white, but her short camis is of silk, starred with gold and with golden fringe; the buskins of her goodly legs are rich with curious anticks and fastened with a jewel. She leads no lamb in a line, but is a pursuer of soft woodland creatures and a queller of the fiercer beasts in her victorious play. In her hand is a boar spear, and at her back the bow and quiver. A golden baldrick is on her breast, letting its virginal beauty be divined; the golden hair shed about her shoulders is lightly blown by the breeze, and it shows the lovelier for fresh leaves and blossoms borne away from the forest trees in the speed of her flight. Spenser's imagination pours forth its treasures to enrich with all pure splendours this ideal of glad virginity. Not love, but honour is her aim, and this she seeks where true honour may be found, amid the toils and dangers of a strenuous life.

In woods, in waves, in wars, she* wents to dwell,
And will be found with peril and with pain;
No can the man that moulds in idle cell
Unto her happy mansion attain:
Before her gate high God did sweat ordaine,
And wakeful watches ever to abide.

Belphebe, the foster child of Diana, forfeits nothing of her sex. Spenser's masculine women are to be found among his evil women. The poet of Faerie Land would make but a poor figure in a company of modern Radical reformers. His giant who proclaims to an applauding crowd the doctrine of equality is "much admired of fools, women, and boys;" but Talus, that stout squire of Arthegall, patron of justice, shoulders the giant from his rock into the welter of the waves. The amazon Radigund revolts against the law of her sex, establishing the liberty of women; but Britomart in fair field overthrows her, cleaves both head and helmet at one stroke, and she, the heroic warrior-lady, repeals that evil custom and destroys every trace of the feminine usurpation. Spenser's Belphebe, with all her pride and freedom, is a gentle maiden. Led by the track of blood, she suddenly comes—expecting a stricken beast—upon the body of Arthur's youthful squire, laid along the ground, his hair, like faded leaves, knotted with blood, his lips below the boyish down showing pale and wan. Belphebe starts back for a moment in horror;

But when she better him beheld she grew
Full of soft passion and unwonted smart:
The point of pity pierced through her tender heart.

She bows meekly down, rears his languid neck, chafes his temples, unfastens his hauberk, and lifts the heavy burganet from his head. What wonder that the youth, waking from his swoon with a long sigh, and looking up and seeing her by his side, takes her for some messenger of God, and, with a boy's ardour and the sense of his unworthiness, is fain to kiss her blessed feet? But Belphebe, no lily, rather the rose of

* *She, i.e., Honour.*

chastity, feels towards him only as towards a fellow-mortal in distress ; a return of love she cannot give him, but all courtesy she gives, and kindness "tempered with grace and goodly modesty." And she is not indifferent to his devotion ; at least no other woman must be adored by him. Amoret is rescued from the boarlike salvage, who is Spenser's embodiment of lust ; Belphebe chases the monster, and strikes him in the throat with her arrow as he enters his den ; returning, she discovers the squire, Timias, leaning over Amoret in swoon, "that new lovely mate ;" he wipes the dew from her eyelids and kisses them, and softly handles every hurt. Belphebe's cheek flushes and her heart is aflame ; it is not jealousy, but "deep disdain and great indignity ;" she has almost strung the arrow to slay him—

Yet held her wrathful hand from vengeance sore ;
But drawing nigh, ere he her well beheld,
"Is this the faith ?" she said—and said no more,
But turned her face and fled away for evermore.

"For evermore," as it seemed to her in her first indignation and to Timias in his first despair ; but the dove, his emissary, bearing round its neck her heartshaped ruby, flits before her and leads her on till she finds the melancholy wretch, no longer to be recognised with his down-fallen hair and meagre face, and hears his complaint, and looks mildly on him once more, and restores him to her favour and to a happiness he will not forfeit by a second indiscretion.*

Belphebe and Amoret are twin sisters ; the story of their birth and fostering is one of Spenser's most graceful inventions. Venus, having lost her little son, seeks for him here and there, in court, and city, and field, and at last among the woods. Diana, with her nymphs, is resting after the chase ; to the inquiry of Venus for her boy she returns a scornful answer, but Venus replies mildly, and the angry goddess is appeased. Diana's maidens set forth to seek the little god, and find in a covert not Cupid, but a fair woman lying entranced, who has brought forth painlessly two lovely babes.

Up they them took, each one a babe uptook,
And with them carried to be fostered :
Dame Phœbe to a nymph her babe betook,
To be upbrought in perfect maidenhood,
And of herself her name Belphebe red ;
But Venus hers thence far away conveyed,
To be upbrought in goodly womanhood ;
And in her little love's stead which was strayed
Her Amoretta called, to comfort her dismayed.

Amoret, the child of the sun's mystical begetting, is brought to the garden of Adonis, that Paradise where the eternal forms of things reside, and from which our earth is replenished with her various kinds.

* Belphebe, we know, is Elizabeth ; it has been conjectured that Sir Walter Raleigh is the squire.

Here she is committed to the care of Psyche and made companion to Psyche's little daughter, Pteasure. Here she learns the lore of love and "true feminitee," until at length, grown to perfect ripeness, she is presented to the world's view—

To be the ensample of true love alone
And lodestar of all chaste affection.

Spenser's thought seems to have been that, glorious in power, freedom, and beauty as virginity may be, such a state is only for rare natures elected to it, and that the true ideal of womanhood, as such, is only attained through love which leads to wedlock. Amoret, more than any other of his heroines, presents us with Spenser's conception in its purest form of the "ewig Weibliche," the eternal feminine principle, which assumes a myriad different forms and finds its highest embodiment in perfect woman. She is to Spenser what Eve was to Milton, the pure type of her sex, the general mother. Hence when her lover finds Amoret, it is in the Island of Love, and not in the island merely, but in its midst, in Venus's temple, and not in the temple merely, but at the feet of the image of the goddess. To this veiled goddess—veiled not because of shame, but to shadow from profane eyes the mystery of her double sex, both male and female—a troop of lovers chant the great hymn of praise taken from the Roman poet's proemium, the *Alma Venus* of Lucretius. The ecstasy of love in all nature—in bird, and beast, and the sea, and the dædal earth—is celebrated, and last in human kind.

Thou art the root of all that joyous is,
Great god of men and women, queen o' the air,
Mother of laughter, and well-spring of bliss.

Encircled by the choir of lovers, and around the feet of the goddess, lie fair damsels—blushing Shamefastness, and Cheerfulness, and Courtesy, and Obedience, and sober Modesty, and soft Silence—and in their midst, of riper years and graver countenance than the rest, is Womanhood, and in the lap of Womanhood is Amoret.

But Amoret, if the cherished child of Love, is also Love's martyr. On her marriage day, while still a virgin wife, she is snatched away from her husband by the enchanter Busirane; she is chained around the slender waist to a pillar in his inner chamber of enchantment, and all magic arts and rare tortures are practised to subdue her constancy. Instead of the lap of Womanhood she has about her sides the harsh hands of Despight and Cruelty; instead of the fair damsels of Venus she has for company those fantastic masquers who pass in procession, some wildly fair, some strange and enigmatical, some fierce and tyrannous, and none true except those who form a sorrowful troop near to that last masquer Death. But Amoret has learnt the preciousness of true love, and joy has finely tempered her soul for the hour of fortitude; and so she endures until deliverance comes with the heroic Britomart. From our present *Faerie Queene* the true ending of this story, as first

conceived by Spenser, has disappeared. We feel in reading the later books of the poem that the second seizure of Amoret—that by the tusked and hairy wild man—is too gross a wrong to be allowed to hurt a life so dear. As Spenser originally wrote and published his third book Amoret is restored to the arms of her husband, who waits sorrowfully outside the enchanted castle, through whose fiery portal Britomart alone can pass. The martyrdom of Amoret should end here; with the meeting of husband and wife, who are also lover and lover, all grief and fear should pass away. And so Spenser had it in the beautiful stanzas which he removed from the poem as continued to the later books. Scudamour, lying forlorn upon the ground, is startled by the voice of Britomart; he looks up, and Amoret stands before him.

There did he see that most on earth him joyed,
His dearest love, the comfort of his days,
Whose too long absence had him sore annoyed
And wearied his life with dull delays;
Straight he upstarted from the loathed layes
And to her ran with hasty eagerness,
Like as a deer that greedily embayes
In the cool soil after long thirstiness
Which he in chase endured hath, now nigh breathless.

Lightly he clipt her in his arm's twain,
And straitly did embrace her body bright—
Her body, late the prison of sad pain,
Now the sweet lodge of love and dear delight.
But the fair lady, overcome quite
Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt
And in sweet ravishment poured out her spright.
No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
But like two senseless stocks in long embracements melt.

The adventures of Florimell are among the most romantic in the *Faerie Queene*, but she herself is chiefly interesting as their subject or their occasion. She is a woman, beautiful, and in distress; this, it seems, should be enough. We know how she is snowy white and chaste as snow; we know how true she is to her sea-sprung lover, Marinell; and we know little more. Were it not that the false snow-lady, who wears her name, is substanceless, and by her unreality makes the true Florimell real, we might think of her as of some vision seen in the curling of great waves upon the strand when the sun shines bright and a land breeze whirls the gleaming spray. Yet we should miss the story of Florimell from Spenser's poem, for it bears us through romantic wood, and wild, and glen, and to the rich sea-shore, and to the great waters where Proteus drives his scaly herd, and to Proteus's bower under a whelming rock against which the billows for ever roar and rave. And to it belongs the marriage of the Medway and the Thames, with that pompous gathering to the feast of British and Irish rivers. In an epic of the days of Drake and Raleigh we should be ill content unless we

grew into acquaintance with Nereus and Neptune, with Panope and Galatea, the nymphs and the gods of sea.

With Britomart it is far otherwise; she does not, like Florimell, remind us of a myth of external nature born of the sea and shore, but is wholly human to the heart. When Spenser would present a patron knight of chastity, he chose a woman; and he made her no vestal vowed to perpetual maidenhood, but the most magnanimous of lovers. That is to say, the highest chastity is no cloistered virtue, but lives in a heart aflame with pure passion. Such a heart is no cold house swept and garnished; it is rather a sanctuary where a seraph breathes upon the altar coals." Britomart, tall of stature, large of limb, knit strongly for deeds of prowess, follows from childhood upward her appointed way. She is trained to toss the spear and shield, to hunt out perils by sea and land; she cannot endure, like other ladies, "to finger the fine needle and nice thread." There is something at once lovely and awe-inspiring in her aspect. And for a time the great heart is a girl's heart, still a stranger to love. Then on a day she wonders musingly who shall be her husband, knowing that fate has allotted her one. She gazes into her father's enchanted mirror, and in that moment her doom comes upon her: in the mirror is presented a knight all armed; the ventayle of his helmet is lifted up; his face, stern yet gracious, looks forth

As Phœbus' face out of the east
Betwixt two shady mountains doth arise.

It is the one face in the world which can subdue Britomart. To Una love had come as a blessedness in giving, a comfort in receiving; to Amoret it had come as a joy fulfilling her life; it comes to Britomart imperiously, tyrannously, laying a burden on her which with all her strength she is hardly able to bear. Her spirits droop during the day-time, and at night, when she lies down by the side of old Glauce, sleep deserts her, her heart beats hard against her side, she cannot check the heavy sighs that come to ease her breast loaded with a mountainous pain.

For me no usual fire, no usual rage,
It is, O nurse, which on my life doth feed.

When the old woman has heard the trouble, glad that it is no worse than honest love, she leans on her weak elbow and kisses softly her child's bosom, feeling how it pants and quakes "as it an earthquake were." Cherished and faintly cheered by Glauce's words, at last a little creeping sleep surprises Britomart; but at morning the pain returns, and neither prayers nor herbs can bring relief. And so they go for advice to learned Merlin, the nurse, with old wives' cunning, having first disguised her foster child. But the mage, who has been frowning over his necromantic book, looks up and laughs aloud; the royal maiden cannot be so concealed from his recognition, and Britomart, blushing instantly to a clear carnation, reads upon his lips her destiny. A glorious destiny it is, for kings and mighty emperors are to be her offspring. Thus

heartened, she begins anew her life of enterprise—arrays her limbs in the armour of Angela, the Saxon queen, all fretted round with gold, which hangs in the church of King Ryence, and so sets forth on adventure under the conduct of Love.

As Amoret, most faithful of wives, was Love's martyr, so Britomart, the patron of chastity, is Love's champion. Outside the Castle Joyous—unworthily so named—a single knight is fiercely assailed by six dastard antagonists. Britomart hastens to the rescue, and having with half a score of strokes dispersed the crew, she mildly inquires the cause of their dissension. It is the custom of the castle to require that each passer shall forsake his own lady and devote himself to its Lady of Delight. The indignation of Britomart flames at the thought of love constrained, and turning from one to another of the ignoble knights she overthrows and subdues them. Presently St. George—for he was the distressed combatant—and his deliverer are in the presence of the wanton lady Malecasta, who receives them sitting on a sumptuous bed. The knight is straightway disarmed ;

But the brave maid would not disarmed be,
But only vented up her umbriere,
And so did let her goodly visage to appear.

The face behind its shadowing armour shines as the moon does when breaking through a cloud and discovering her bright head to the discomfited world. This incident of Britomart's beauty of womanhood beaming or flashing forth before men's eyes from its dark coverture is dwelt on by Spenser's imagination with a peculiar fondness, and he repeats it, varying the circumstances, not fewer than three times. Again at Malbecco's inhospitable house, to which the knights have forced an entrance, seeking shelter from the darkness, storm, and rain, when they dry themselves before the blazing fire, Britomart too must be disarrayed—

Tho', whenas vailed was her lofty crest,
Her golden locks, that were in trammels gay
Upbouden, did themselves adown display,
And raught unto her heels, like sunny beams
That in a cloud their light did sometime stay,
Their vapour vaded, show their golden gleams
And through the persant air shoot forth their azure streams.

She puts off her heavy habergeon, and lets her frock, tucked short about her as she rode, flow to her foot with "careless modesty." And so disarrayed she seems no other than Bellona returned from the slaughter of the giants, with helmet loosed and untying from the arm her gorgonian shield. In like manner in the castle to which she conducts Amoret, and before which she has joustured with the young knight, when the brave youth would be thrust out because he has no love nor lady, Britomart, his overthrower in arms, with majestic courtesy undoes her helmet to disclose her sex and claim him for her knight. Her falling shower of hair

is like the play of summer lightning in the heavens. The youth pours forth his thanks and worships the great lady in his heart.

In Malecasta's abode of false delight the knights whom she has subdued, careless livers in the lap of pleasure, are to Britomart no more than shadows; she heeds them not. But Malecasta, stricken with love for the supposed male warrior whose face has shone beneath the umbriere, claims some pity from Britomart; for has she not herself known the imperious force of love? And so, when the hour for sleep had come, with kindly thoughts

She 'gan herself despoile
And safe commit to her soft feathered nest.

But at night, turning wearily, she wakes to find the wanton dame couched by her side; she rises in wrath; a cry from the terrified Malecasta rings through the house; the six knights come running hastily to their lady's help; she lies swooning on the ground. We shall not do Britomart's heroic beauty wrong if we remember her as she appeared at that moment, standing in snow-white smock, with unbound locks, fierce in her maidenhood, "threatening the point of her avenging blade." Love's champion must needs be a terrible justicer to all who wrong love. So she is found to be by Busirane. With her ample shield thrown before her and the advanced sword in her hand, she has passed the fire of his enchanted portal; she has waited impatiently in the chamber of arras and read the strange inscription over each door; then of a sudden the marvel of the masque goes by, and Britomart gazes on, and of a sudden it is ended. But when the same things repeat themselves next day she knows the deed to do and is swift and sure: she springs into the inner chamber, she plucks from the wizard's hand the knife which was meant to pierce the tender side of Amoret, she smites him to the ground, and when he has risen, sullen but subdued, and is reading backward his mighty spells, all the while Britomart stands by him with outstretched sword held high above his head.

Spenser's last introduction of the incident of the helmeted face is when the lovers are made acquainted with one another. Britomart has overthrown Arthegall in the tourney, unwitting that it was he, knowing him only as the Salvage Knight. Shortly after, as Scudamour and Arthegall ride in company, they espy the winner at the tourney. Scudamour rides against the stranger and is unhorsed. A like mischance befalls Arthegall, and thereupon begins a furious combat on foot. At length one hideous stroke lights upon her helmet; she stands unharmed, but her ventayle is shorn away.

With that her angel's face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddy morn appeared in sight,
Dewed with silver drops through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder than besoomed aright
Through toilsome heat and labour of her weary fight.

Around this "angel's face" the yellow hair makes a golden border,

Arthegall's hand, lifted again to strike, drops; the sword falls from his fingers; he sinks upon his knees before her, making religion of his wonder and beseeching pardon of the injured goddess. And she, looking stern, stands over him threatening to strike if he will not rise and continue the combat. But old Glauce is at hand to bid her pause, and by degrees the face seen in the magic mirror and the face of the kneeling warrior grow together and are seen to be one. When Scudamour greets the knight as 'Arthegall.'

Her heart did leap and all her heart-strings tremble
For sudden joy and secret fear withal.

There is no sudden love-making between the pair; Britomart's modest countenance, "so goodly grave and full of princely awe," acts as a check to ranging fancies. But the great hearts are drawing near and are at length made wholly one.

Yet Britomart is not incapable of a touch of honest jealousy. Her lover has been absent long; tidings come that he, the invincible warrior, has been made captive to a woman. The truth seems but too clear; Britomart shuts herself into her chamber in wrath and pain. If she could only fight with him and die! She throws herself on her bed lamenting.

Yet did she not lament with loud alew,
As women wont, but with deep sighs and singults few.

She is at length convinced by Talus that his master is indeed in the dungeon of the amazon. Britomart arms herself, and uttering no word, good nor bad, looking right down, and with a heart very dangerous and fell, she rides to his delivery. She who had overthrown her lord in fight is now to be his saviour. But the sight of Arthegall clad in womanish attire is too full of shame; Britomart turns her head aside; it is, however, only for a moment, and then, filled with a sense of the piteousness of his disgrace, she hastens towards him to bring him comfort and restore him to his self-respect.

In Spenser's earliest volume of verse his muse masqued "in lowly sheperd's weeds." In the last book of his *Faerie Queene* he returns to pastoral poetry, but it is a pastoral poetry into which courtly grace and knightly prowess enter. The stories of Serena and of Pastorella lie side by side, and each heightens the effect of the other. With Serena we are among the woods, their shadows, their wild recesses and fantastic boughs; her page is the gentle salvage man; her foes are the salvage folk, who have laid her naked for sacrifice upon their altar under the faint light of stars, and the din of whose horns and bagpipes is in our ears until Calepine thrusts into the throng and delivers his love from fear, though not from shamefastness. With Pastorella we are amid the fields, at the sheepfold, and among the little cots where shepherds lie; we listen to their gay singing and the rustic melody of their pipes. Old Melibee, half shepherd, half sage, is such a reverent figure as William Blake loved to

present in his pastoral subjects. The girl heroine of Spenser's sixth book might have been a sister of Shakspeare's Perdita or Miranda. Like them, she is a child of high estate removed from courtly surroundings into a way of life more simple, more free, where objects and interests are few, natural, and enduring. As with them, a courtly lover comes to make discovery of his rustic princess, and she returns to the place assigned her by her birth. Like Perdita, she is queen of the country-side, mistress of rural junketings, the prettiest lass that ever ran on the green sward, and nothing that she does

But smacks of something greater than herself.

We think of her as she stood upon the hillock when first seen by Calidore, crowned with flowers, clad in home-made green, and environed with a garland of lovely maidens; the lusty swains pipe and sing her praises, "and oft rejoice and oft for wonder shout." We think of her as she meekly leads her little flock at her old foster father's bidding, as she tends at supper while the princely Calidore sits and cannot choose but follow her with his eyes, as she gathers strawberries in the green wood with her rival lovers, as she graciously receives the rustic presents of Coridon, squirrel, or sparrow, or looks on while the Knight of Courtesy, a shepherd for the nonce, pulls the rugged teats of her mother ewes. We remember her in the dimness of the brigand's cave, and how joy came to her with the clear voice of Calidore, and again as she stood half arrayed and all amazed at that moment when old Melissa espied the rosy mark upon her breast, and ran in haste, as one dismayed yet full of joy, to tell her mistress that the long-lost babe was found.

The *Faerie Queene* is not, however, a legend solely of good women. Being bound "by fealty to all womankind," Spenser has not permitted himself to shrink from presenting ideals of feminine weakness, folly, shame, and vice. There is the false and foul Duessa; there is Acrasia, that Circean enchantress who changes her lovers from men to swine; and Phædria, the lightest of idle bubbles on the Idle Lake; and Hellenore, whose shameless coquetry soon turns to a thing of grosser name; and the superb, wanton Malecasta; and Lucifera, queen of spiritual pride; and Philotime, queen of worldly ambition; and Radigund, the revoltress against the obedience of her sex; and the brutal Argante; and Mirabella, with her little hard and shallow heart; and the blind and malevolent Abessa; and the grisly hags Envy and Detraction. Spenser broadly divides the evil from the good. If he does not make an imaginative inquest into complex problems of life and character, he serves us perhaps more by his high yet serene ardour on behalf of all that is excellent and against all that is ignoble. The only passage in the *Faerie Queene* touched with cynicism, the story put with dramatic propriety into the mouth of the Squire of Daines, is derived from Ariosto.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

Old Joquelin's Request: a Tale about Women.

I.

WHEN the millionaire M. Joquelin died, his fellow-townsmen of Ville-Joyeuse were curious to learn how he had disposed of the immense fortune amassed by him in trading upon the credulity of his contemporaries in various ways during a long course of years. The sly old fellow, who had been turn by turn merchant, theatrical manager, newspaper proprietor, hotel owner, and who, finally, as a dealer in pictures and bric-a-brac, had flourished a familiar character in Ville-Joyeuse for the twenty years preceding his death—this patient and versatile money-grubber had left no heirs. He had been married three times; but no children had resulted from these matrimonial ventures, so far as people were aware. The last years of his life had been rendered comfortable by the ministrations of an old servant of sixty, named Euphrasie, who had the moustaches and voice of a man, but the gentlest of tempers and the deftest of hands at making soups and coffee. When her master died, this old woman marched behind his coffin, erect as a drum-major, but uttering howls of awful pitch and perfect sincerity. It was generally believed that she did not make all this noise for nothing, and would be found to have inherited a good share, if not all, of Joquelin's millions. Some observant bachelors in low circumstances took this opportunity of remarking that she was a pious woman, and would make a good wife to any man sensible enough to prefer a beauteous soul to an attractive face.

But, pious or not, Euphrasie came in only for a small legacy under her master's will. The rest was bequeathed for a purpose so extraordinary that it burst upon Ville-Joyeuse like the report of a 300-wag-power joke. Imagine the amusement of a quick-witted French community on hearing that old Joquelin had left the bulk of his fortune to the local University, on condition of its founding a chair of gynæcology!

What is gynæcology? and what would a professor of this science have to say to his pupils? The wiseacres of Ville-Joyeuse—and they were many, thank goodness—knew that *gynæc* meant woman; but the *ology* was too much for them in the present instance, as they freely confessed to one another while discussing the subject in the cafés and other places of public resort. During half a week, wherever people of either sex met for business or pleasure, they inquired of one another, "What is gynæcology?"

They were soon enlightened, however; for the departed Joquelin had

left abundant explanations in the will which he had drawn up with his own hand, being at the time of a sound mind in an unsound body. He stated that the topic on which his professor of gynecology would have to lecture was WOMAN. Yes, woman; her customs, reasonings, tastes, sentiments, virtues, failings, and caprices; with special reference to the wiles and snares by which she seeks to entrap the unwary among the opposite sex, and as to the best means of avoiding or escaping the same. Also concerning certain antidotes for the poison of love, and philosophical consolations for the disappointed.

Now Ville-Joyeuse was a town in which the fair sex had long been accustomed to have things their own way. They ruled both the roast and the boiled, and were noted throughout the rest of France not less for their shrill tongues than for their dark eyes and neat ankles. On market days, when the country carts came jolting in with mountains of cabbages and garden flowers, the town was filled with girls and women, in picturesque scarlet kirtles and velvet bodices, who looked like comedy queens, and behaved as such; domineering over that weaker creature, man, in the matter of hard bargains, until his soul and his purse were crushed flat together. A proverb, of two centuries standing, said, "Give the devil his due; but trust a woman of Ville-Joyeuse to take hers for herself;" and an old chronicler, who flourished at about the time when Rabelais was poking fun at the sex in his *Gargantua*, wrote feelingly: "I have seen men come to parlous plight from seeking wives at Ville-Joyeuse. As for me, I rejoice that I am single; since, though poor in worldly goods, I can at least call my soul my own; which would not be the case if I had taken one of the women of hereabouts to rule over me."

These were significant words; but, even accepting them with a grain of salt, it is evident that the fair creatures about whom they had been written must afford rich themes for study to the philosophical lecturer. Equally clear was it that for any one to have conceived the plan of revenging himself for the tyranny of the Ville-Joyeusiennes by subjecting them to a course of analytical lectures, was proof of his having himself suffered abominable things at their fair hands; and the truth is that no man had ever been so miserably treated by women as old Joquelin. In the peroration to his will, where he poured out all the bitterness of his soul in recapitulating his relations with the sex, he wrote pathetically: "My first wife died in a fit of rage, at my having contradicted her; my second eloped from me, because I let her do as she pleased, which, she said, rendered her life too dull; as for my third, it was I who absconded from her, after fruitlessly begging that she would use her tongue to argue with instead of her nails. I was a theatrical manager in Bolivia at this time, and I am sorry to say yellow fever was raging in the place. I trust it did not prove fatal to Madame Joquelin; but I have had no news of her for twenty-five years. Heaven give her the peace she denied me!"

Now in the above words you have a statement of M. Joquelin's reasons for instituting the chair of gynæcology, and one may proceed to relate how his bequest affected those whom it most concerned, namely, the University authorities.

Opinions were, of course, much divided at first, and two camps were formed of the professors who were for refusing the legacy, because of its frivolousness; and of those who urged its acceptance, on the ground that to reject the gynæcological endowment would be to throw away the other large sums bequeathed for University purposes generally. Old Joquelin had expressly stipulated that all the provisos of his will must stand or fall together; and that if the University were loth to do his pleasure, the whole of his fortune should go to the public charities in Ville-Joyeuse. The married professors were the quickest to point out how highly undesirable this would be. The gynæcological endowment, said they, would only absorb about 25,000 francs a year, and there was no end to the fine things that might be done with the rest of the money, amounting to about eight millions of francs. The University might build itself a new library and a new chemical laboratory, add to the curiosities of its museum, and raise the salaries of its professors all round. This last consideration ended by carrying the votes of the young unmarried professors, who still cherished illusions as to the angelic character of woman, but were shrewd enough to see that an increase of salary conduces to marriage, which was the haven towards which most of them were steering. So, at a meeting of the Academical Council it was decided, by a majority, to apply to Government for leave to accept old Joquelin's bequest.

In France nothing can be done without leave from Government, and it is noticeable that Government generally refuses its permission to any new thing. Moreover, as the Universities* are exclusively governed by laymen of the free-thinking sort, they have an implacable adversary in the Church, whose clergy raise indignant cries of "encroachment" every time one of the faculties endeavours to strike out for itself some new path. In the present instance, gynæcology being a novelty, the Minister of Public Instruction would doubtless have followed the immortal traditions of his office by declining to sanction it, lest their Greatnesses the Archbishops and Bishops should be huffed, and lest the lesser clergy should set up their customary wail of the Church being in danger. But, to his Excellency's astonishment, the Bishop of Ville-Joyeuse was pleased to append his signature to the memorial of the Academic Council, alleging that lectures on the deceitfulness of women might tend to enhance public morals. Under these auspicious circumstances, the Minister gave the required leave. He thought that the Bishop must have privately bargained with the University for a share in Joquelin's

* There is, properly speaking, but one "University" in France, the word being an abstract term comprising the different *faculties* of Paris, Montpellier, Nancy, Ville-Joyeuse, &c.

bequest, and was disposed to laugh in his sleeve at episcopal astuteness ; but in this he was wrong, for the holy man had been moved to take action solely at the request of the most influential person in Ville-Joyeuse—Madame la Comtesse de Sainte-Folye, the Prefect's wife.

Madame de Sainte-Folye was a shining light in Ville-Joyeuse. She left to her husband the insignia of power, but it was she who ruled the department over which he nominally presided. She was twenty-five years old, small in figure, dark-eyed, merry, imperious, and altogether one of those daughters of Eve whom there is no resisting. She could get her way by coaxing, by promising, or by stamping her little foot ; but she always got it somehow. Frisky as a dragon-fly, inquisitive as a child, smart as a prize doll, eager for novelties, she was never happy unless wearing or discussing some new thing. Her dresses lasted her a week, her gloves an hour, her whims a day. She had ever some fresh caprice in view which engrossed all her energies until it was satisfied, when she would toss it aside like a spoilt toy. She prattled, flirted, raced about, danced, ordered people to and fro, cried now and then, when people blundered in doing what she wished ; but was never serious an instant. In her relations with the citizens of Ville-Joyeuse she displayed affability and tact ; but was despotic, as only popes, pashas, and pretty women can be. She had a finger in everybody's pie, and kept herself acquainted with all that was going on in the town, through the reports of social emissaries who formed her court, and whom she had trained to fetch and carry like spaniels. These slaves of her will were young officers of the garrison, young priests of the pushing kind, barristers, civil servants, and journalists, who attended her parties and deemed themselves amply paid by a smile for any gossip they brought or any service they rendered. No empress was so promptly obeyed as Madame de Sainte-Folye, and none ever wielded more real power. Talk of woman's sphere being limited ! why, a word from the Prefect's irresistible wife had released prisoners ; won lawsuits for persons who had (legally) not a leg to stand upon ; settled political, ecclesiastical, or regimental squabbles of long-enduring bitterness. The President of the Tribunal, a lean and austere man, was so afraid of the bewitching Countess that he dared not refuse to do her bidding, even when his conscience prompted him to rebel ; the General of the garrison would rather have faced the fire of a Prussian battery than angry flashes from her eyes ; as for the venerable Bishop, who was waddling towards a better world at a placid jog-trot, he—good easy man—had found it safe as well as pleasant to humour the Countess when she had need of him, that he might rely on her powerful aid when he had need of her. Upon her requesting him to co-operate in the gynæcology scheme (she addressed him after a dinner at the Prefecture, while sweetening his coffee with her own hands, and filling his glass with yellow chartreuse), his Greatness complied at once, not because he understood anything about the scheme, but because she did ; and anticipated rare fun from it,

Amusement, indeed, was all that Madame de Sainte-Folye looked for in this affair; and once the notion had got rattling about in her head like a pea in a child's drum, she lost no time in summoning the members of the Academical Council to confer with her at the Prefecture touching the election of the new professor, his programme of lectures, and so forth. The Academical Body duly came, headed by their Rector,* and looking portentously solemn, after the custom of French dons, whose manners are a standing protest against the levity of other orders of Frenchmen. A scrubby, ill-dressed, and snuff-taking lot they were, whose coat collars touched their ears, and whose coat tails dangled almost to their heels. They quarrelled on the staircase about the opinions they were to put forward in their collective capacity; for while some wished the new chair to be filled by a doctor who should treat of woman from the medical point of view, others wanted an historical lectureship, which should deal with the part played by women in the world's politics; and others, again, were for expatiating on the sex æsthetically, as regards their influence on literature and art. However, they were reduced to silence, when a footman ushered them into the Countess's boudoir like so many black-beetles entering the bower of a mocking-bird. What a boudoir it was—all mirrors, gilding, perfume, and satin chairs—a very love nest!

The Countess greeted the learned body with her usual good grace, though she felt much inclined to laugh at their grave looks, which had nothing suitable, so far as she saw, to the matter in hand. She was dressed in a showy lace *peignoir*, with a number of violet bows in front, and sat half reclining on a sofa, with a Maltese terrier on her lap. A handsome officer, bearing the epaulets and siglets of a staff captain, was installed by her side, and made the terrier snap by tickling his nose with a rose-stalk; while hard by sat and simpered a pink and curly-headed young priest, who had silver buckles in his varnished shoes, and held his shovel hat on his knees with both hands like a basin full of holy water. In the background M. de Sainte-Folye, the Prefect, could be seen standing on the hearthrug, with his coat skirts under his arms, and an eyeglass fixed on his cheek bone, through which he looked at the world's affairs, as it were distantly, through a window-pane. He was a bald and languid man, who never intruded his own individuality when his wife was present, and so took an early opportunity of retiring, with noiseless steps, like one who knows that he shall not be missed. Meantime, the footman having brought the small satin chairs forward, the Academical Deputation, who were nine strong like the muses, plumped down in a semicircle, sniffing the odour of iris that pervaded the boudoir, and wreathing their features in propitiatory smiles at the Maltese dog, who, disliking their appearance, yelped.

The Countess introduced her two friends, Captain the Viscount de

* France is divided into a number of academical districts, each presided over by a "Rector."

Patatras (who clicked his heels together and bowed) and Monsieur l'Abbé de Gentilleux (who stood up blushing and smiled benignly): then she proceeded at once to business, in her clear, vivacious voice, which, when she was in a good humour, suggested the music of a crystal flute sounding a charge.

"I take a great interest in this scheme of yours, gentlemen," she said, whilst her large eyes sparkled frolicsomenly. "I hope you will lose no time in inaugurating your chair, for I am impatient to hear what your wisdom has to say about us poor women."

"Women; ah, Madame!" exclaimed the Rector, who was a fat dignitary, with a white beard and red ears. "Woman, Madame; that is a subject most delightful to handle!"

"A subject of most pleasing features," added the Vice-Rector, who was thin-shanked, but mildly gay at times.

"One which must be embraced cordially, or not at all," chimed in the sedate Professor of the Coptic and Syriac tongues.

"Come, come; I see you are all joking," said the Countess, with a smothered laugh. "M. de Patatras here could not speak more gallantly, though he pretends to know us by heart."

"My experience does not range so far back as Monsieur Piocheux's," responded the Captain, alluding to the Professor of Coptic, who had written a book on mummies.

"Nor so widely as Monsieur l'Abbé's, perhaps, for he knows us through the confessional," observed Madame de Sainte-Folye; at which the nine professors tittered like one man, while the pink and curly priest coloured to his tonsure and murmured deprecatingly, "Oh, Madame!"

"Well, we are not angels, but we are not demons either. Is there any one present prepared to say we are demons?" inquired the Countess, archly.

"I should like the secrecy of the ballot, if we are to vote on that question," remarked the Viscount de Patatras.

"Oh, your vote wouldn't count," said the Prefect's wife. "I prefer to hear Mr. Rector, who is a married man."

Mr. Rector, who was blessed with a strong-minded wife, hastened to affirm that women were not demons; but hereat Viscount de Patatras said something in the Countess's ear which made her put her handkerchief to her mouth, and a colloquy ensued between them, which was but half audible to the professors.

"You are always talking nonsense," said the Countess.

"Why? because I maintain that a married man knows less about women than other persons?"

"You didn't put it that way; you said something about a caterpillar and a cabbage."

"Well, the caterpillar who restricts his observations of the vegetable kingdom to one single cabbage is less versed in botany than the butterfly who sits from bud to blossom."

"I suppose you mean yourself by the butterfly?"

"No; I am out of the running."

The Countess threw a droll look at him and shrugged her shoulders. "Gentlemen," she said, "M. de Patatras seems to think that your new lecturer ought to be a bachelor. I have no opinion on the subject. Probably you have made up your minds to admit all comers to the competition?"

"We are bound to do so by the terms of M. Joquelin's will, Madame," said the Rector, ponderously. He had majestic manners, but a queer accent; for his tongue being too large for his mouth, he rolled it unctuously against his palate like a big sweetmeat. "Within forty days of our advertising for a professor, Madame, the candidates must send in their papers, and the chair will be awarded to the one who, by common consent of the Council, shall have written the most erudite essay upon—ahem!—your amiable sex."

"The only stipulation is that he must be a good linguist, so as to know what foreign authors have written about women," said the Professor of Coptic, sapiently.

"And be a physician, else he could not treat of their ailments," chimed in the Professor of Palæontology, who was famed for having unearthed a female bone of the pre-Eveite period.

"I think he ought to be a married man, for propriety's sake," observed the Professor of Jurisprudence, who was single, but engaged.

"No; unmarried, else he would not enjoy independence," opined the Professor of Political Economy, who was a widower.

"Joquelin's will makes no stipulation whatever," stuttered the Rector, with such warmth that he looked as if he were going to chew his tongue and swallow it. "The examiners must have their choice unfettered. It stands to reason, though, that the candidates must be laymen;" saying which he glanced mistrustfully at the Abbé Gentilleux.

"Come, come; I see you are not agreed at all, and I must settle the matter for you," interposed Madame de Sainte-Folye. "Mr. Rector, you had best send in all the essays to me, and I will award the prize."

"Oh, Madame!" shouted the nine professors, astonished.

"What, do you doubt my fitness to adjudicate?" asked the Countess, with the slight frown which marked her fair brow whenever she was contradicted. "Surely a lady is better qualified than any one to award the palm in such a contest as this?"

"Obviously, Madame," assented the learned nine, who were intimidated by the frown.

"Well, then, it's an understood thing," rejoined the Countess, brightening again; "only mind I will have no exclusion of persons. I expect M. de Patatras to compete, and the Abbé Gentilleux too; and I should be glad if each of you gentlemen would send in an essay, so that your wise remarks may improve my mind."

"It shall be as you please, Madame," mumbled the Rector, bobbing

his corpulent body, while the curly priest hoisted on his young cheeks rosy signals of distress, which the Countess disregarded.

"And stay, please one word more," added Madame de Sainte-Folye as the professors, standing up in an obsequious row, prepared to depart. Please request the candidates to write in a large hand, on nice thick paper, and to divide their essays into short paragraphs, with spaces between, so that I may find them easy to read. Thanks; that's all."

Madame de Sainte-Folye dismissed the deputation condescendingly, with a pretty smile apiece; and the nine learned men trooped out, musing as they went that the Salic Law, which purports to have abolished the sovereignty of woman in France, is but a delusion and a snare.

II.

A week after this the walls of Ville-Joyeuse were papered with large yellow posters, inviting candidates for the new chair of gynæcology to send in their essays within forty days to M. le Recteur Boulottin. The competition was thrown open to all males of unimpeachable character, and great latitude was allowed them in the treatment of their theme—Woman; nevertheless, they were requested to bring their minds to bear specially on the elucidation of the following seven points:—

1st. The alleged inferiority of Woman with respect to man. Is she intellectually and physically weaker by nature, or is it custom that makes her so? State your opinions as to woman's fitness to bear arms and to rule States, assuming the credibility of the legends that have been written touching Semiramis, Deborah, Aspasia, Bradamanta, and Marpesia (the Amazon heroines), Pope Joan, Joan of Arc, &c.

2nd. The condition of Woman in polygamous communities. Is female influence less paramount in countries where woman is enslaved? Quote on this head the sayings of Turks or experienced Mormons.

3rd. The soothing influence of Woman in allaying political strife. Illustrate by the examples of Delilah, Judith, Jael, Helen, and Charlotte Corday.

4th. The condition of Woman during the ages of chivalry. How were matrimonial arrangements affected by the custom of winning one's bride at the lance-point? Was a true knight likely to set the greater store by a wife for whose sake he had lost a leg and an eye in a doughty combat? And is there any reason to suppose that the decline of chivalry was due, in a measure, to the regrets occasionally expressed by husbands in after-life over the limbs they had thrown away when young?

5th. The influence of Woman in the domain of poetry and art. Explain, if you can, why poets have generally been more eloquent in praising other men's wives than their own. Cite the poets, if any, who have continued rhyming to their own wives with unabated fervour until the end of their careers.

6th. The future of Woman. Consider the possibility of improving

her fate and increasing her happiness. Would the concession of equal rights with men be calculated to secure these desirable ends? And in the event of all posts in Church and State being distributed, share and share alike, between the two sexes, is it presumable that woman would rest satisfied until she had got man's share as well as her own?

7th. The rational faculties of Woman. Analyse the causes of her habitual success in proving the point by argument.

The foregoing programme was like a patchwork quilt, to which every professor had contributed a piece; but it was drafted by Mr. Rector Boulottin himself, and copied out fair for the printer by that official's clerk, young Xavier Turlupot. Now the time has come for stating that M. Boulottin had a pretty daughter named Isabelle, with whom this Turlupot was in love; and that the maiden scornfully rejected the poor clerk's suit. Maidens often do that kind of thing. They count it nothing that a man should be devoted, tender, constant: if he be ugly, ill-dressed, impecunious, and tiresome, he stands a chance of being loved to desperation, or else he is vehemently hated. Turlupot was hated. Isabelle could not bear the sight of him; and one regrets to state that if the pair met in any place where no third parties were present, she put out her tongue at him. It is still more regrettable to add that Turlupot repaid this compliment by putting out his tongue at her, for he made love after a fashion all his own.

He was certainly a singular lad, whose attractions were not calculated to endear him to the sex at first sight. Brimful of Greek, Latin, and science, his large ears stood out at right angles to his face, as if they were props, intended to keep the sides of his head from bulging out under the pressure of knowledge which his brain contained. He was tall, and very lean in the bust, arms, and legs, but withal pot-bellied, so that he suggested comparison with a string knotted in the middle. His mouth—a very trap for the reception of food, which he ate in enormous quantities—was lined with two rows of jagged teeth, most unsightly to behold when he grinned; and he was always grinning. If a joke tickled him, he laughed aloud, blowing off his laughter in gusts, which made glasses jingle and sent household cats flying under the table; and sometimes he laughed in this boisterous manner at inward jokes of his own, which he kept to himself. His qualities were habitual taciturnity, plodding patience, and a formidable capacity for work. He could get through twice the labour of two ordinary clerks in little time and without apparent fatigue; nor was his work ever below the best samples of clerky skill. His master, who employed him not merely for the transcription but for the composition of most of the academical reports, books, and scholastic pamphlets from which he—the Rector—derived honour and profit, accounted him a treasure; and Madame Boulottin, who was a domineering dame, valued him for his willingness in doing her errands. As for Isabelle, her aversion from the clerk served only to give the latter a surer footing in the house. If he had been good-looking and agreeable,

M. Boulottin and his wife would have stood on their guard, for it was no scheme of theirs that their richly-portioned daughter should marry a penniless clerk; but, reassured by Isabelle's detestation of Turlupot, they were amused by her spiteful sallies, and one of their favourite parental jokes consisted in twitting the girl with her unaccountable blindness to the clerk's many perfections.

The Rector would remark ironically: "Xavier will become a great man some of these days; you ought not to turn up your nose at him, Belle."

And Madame Boulottin would say, with a smile: "I am too tired to go out shopping; will you to-day, Belle? but ask M. Turlupot to accompany you. I am sure he makes an excellent chaperon."

Thus Xavier and Isabelle were constantly thrown into each other's society, and, whenever they met, they exchanged barbed words by the volley. Isabelle, who had a sly talent for caricature, would draw portraits of Turlupot under the odious images of apes, spiders, and toads, and thrust these works of art into places where he was sure to see them. Xavier, on his side, would put into the hollow of a garden oak, which served him as a post-office, amatory odes, not devoid of humorous spice, which Isabelle pretended not to read. But she did read them. Things had been going on in this way for months and months, when at last old Joquelin's death and his strange bequest set Isabelle musing, like the rest of the young ladies in Ville-Joyeuse, on the threatened lectures anent her sex. Her curiosity was sharply stimulated, and she asked Xavier, in a tone of sarcasm, whether he intended to compete for the professorship.

He answered "Yes," gravely.

"Then," said she, "you must get me seats for your lectures, for I want to laugh."

"No," said he; "you shall come to my lectures, but you will go away crying."

This was only his joke, for he had not made up his mind to compete for the prize, and was by no means sanguine about winning it if he did; but Isabelle had her misgivings. Her experience was that prizes generally fall to those least deserving of them; and it was just like Turlupot's impudence, thought she, to set up as a lecturer on women—he whom maids and matrons combined in abhorring, insomuch that, at the rare balls he attended, he found it difficult to obtain partners! However, Turlupot was soon seen driving his quill at odd moments over large pages of foolscap, which he carefully locked up before leaving his desk, and this did render him a little more interesting than usual in Isabelle's eyes. All the town was talking about the competitors, and it was something for the Rector's daughter to be able to tell her girl-friends that she knew one of them. She would have liked, though, to get a sight of the clerk's manuscript, and conned over many stratagems for this purpose. If Xavier had left his loose sheets lying about for half-an-hour, she would have been down on them like a kitten on cream. She actually tried after dark if any of

her keys would fit his desk-lock; and, failing in that, she made an attempt to abstract the keys from his very pocket while he was sitting on a bench enjoying a little repose in the cool of the evening; but this would not do either, for he was wide-awake.

It nettled Isabelle to think that Turlupot might be writing things about *her* in his essay—a mean revenge, which would be just like him, she reflected. One day, about a fortnight after the posters had been out, and when public expectation was rising on tiptoe, it happened that the Rector and Madame Boulottin went to pay a day's visit to some country friends, and Isabelle was left alone in the house with Turlupot and the servants. The sly puss put on her straw hat and went to walk in the garden, bethinking her that during the Rector's absence the clerk might be tempted to take a holiday, and omit some of his customary precautions in concealing his manuscript or keys. Through the open windows of the study she could see him writing industriously at his high desk—his cheek almost touching his left hand, whilst his right sprawled over the paper like a huge spider. Presently he looked up, and, perceiving her, paused to enjoy the enticing vision. Isabelle had chestnut hair, all fluffed and curled over a saucy face, with blue eyes, and the most bewitching, pouting mouth. Her dress was of white muslin, with a light blue sash, and, sitting under a tree, she shaded her eyes with a parasol. At her feet barked a big, woolly poodle, with a pink nose, whom she occasionally caressed with her foot, as he rolled on his back, kicking his legs aloft.

Xavier Turlupot thought the opportunity highly propitious for a little courting, and laid his papers aside under lock and key. Then he strolled out with his hands in his pockets, and his large lips puckered up like a tomato, and whistling. He walked with the lolling movements of a bottle on the water, and pretended to be unconscious of Isabelle's presence until he was close to her—all of which roused the maiden's ire.

"Well," cried she, tauntingly, as soon as he was within earshot, "I think you might be civil enough to say 'Good morning,' instead of staring like that at midday."

"Good morning, Mademoiselle," said Turlupot, stopping short with a mocking bow. "Dear me, how well those blue ribbons become you!—blue is my favourite colour."

"That shows what stories you can tell; the other day I was wearing cerise, and you professed that cerise was your favourite."

"So it was while you wore it."

"Oh, and if I wore 'love-slain toad,' I suppose you would become crazy about that?"

"Certainly—quite crazy."

"Your tastes are capricious."

"No; but my affections are constant."

"If you put such sentiments in your essay, it will be worth reading," tittered the girl. "I should have thought you found a sufficient vent for that kind of nonsense in your verses."

"I am glad to discover that my verses are perused by you."

"It doesn't require that I should peruse them to feel sure that they must be full of stuff."

The dialogue was continued in this pleasant style for a few minutes longer, and Isabelle flushed indignantly at the clerk's imperturbable coolness in foiling her thrusts. With his crop-head and lantern-jaws, he looked uglier than ever; and, oh, what an aggravating thing it was to see the twinkling, weazley glance in his eyes, that indicated more amusement than irritation at her pin-stabs! At last she changed her mode of attack.

"How is your essay progressing?" she asked, with seeming indifference. "I suppose you would object to show it me?"

"I should certainly object."

"Then you must be ashamed of it for its utter badness. That doesn't surprise me. You cannot know much of your subject."

"I know you, and that you treat me like a dog."

"If I did that you would have nothing to complain of, for I treat dogs very well. Here, Toto;" and as the poodle, obedient to her call, rose on his hind legs and placed his forepaws on her lap, Isabelle drew his woolly head to her lips and covered it with kisses. "There—what do you think of that?" she inquired with defiance.

"I think I should like to be in Toto's place," replied Xavier Turlupot, devoutly.

"Oh, that is too much ambition!" retorted the saucy maiden. "Before you aspire to a place, you should examine your fitness for it."

"Don't you consider me fit to be even a dog, then?"

"By no means. Toto here is handsome, trustful, well bred: he does everything I tell him; he is not conceited, and he does not write nonsense."

"I can, at least, resemble the gifted creature in doing everything you ask."

"Then show me your essay."

"No; not that."

"Then go about your business!" exclaimed Isabelle, rising impatiently from her seat; and she shot him one of those glances which would be pistol-bullets could their projectors transform them into lead by a mere effort of volition. But just at this moment, when the relations between the pair had grown sulphurous, a diversion occurred. Jeannette, the blowsy *bonne*, or maid-of-all-work, crossed the lawn, carrying between her fingers, which smelt strongly of culinary operations with garlic, a card, which was that of Madame de Sainte-Folye, who had come to see the Rector. In another moment the Countess herself appeared and tripped across the garden, followed by Viscount de Patatras and her Maltese dog. She sported a Gainsborough hat, sixteen-button gloves, reaching to her elbows, a stick parasol as high as her shoulder, boots with four-inch scarlet heels, and a gold-rimmed double eye-glass, which was perched just

on the tip of her little nose, so that she could see over its top. She was chattering like a magpie with the Viscount as she walked, and greeted Isabelle with her usual vivacity, seizing her hands and kissing her on both cheeks.

"How do you do, my dear child?" she said. "I have come to see your father in order to request him to send me in the prize essays as fast as he gets them, so that I may not have to read the whole lot in a lump. I suppose you have not heard much about these essays; but Mr. Rector will understand what I mean if you give him my message."

"Very well, Madame. Pray take a seat," said Isabelle respectfully; for French young ladies are very deferential towards married women, and chiefly to Prefects' wives.

"No, thanks," answered the Countess; "we will wander about and see if there are any strawberries or cherries to be found in this pretty garden of yours. Oh, there is a tree covered with lovely bigaroones! How are you, M. Turlupot? You must exert your talents by getting me some of that fruit."

"Willingly, Madame la Comtesse; if you like we will enact the scene of Rousseau's *Confessions*, said the ugly clerk, bowing.

"What might that scene be?" asked Madame de Sainte-Folye, who was not versed in her classics.

"Why, I will climb the tree, and shake down cherries for you and Mademoiselle Isabelle to catch."

"In our mouths?"

"Oh, no; your mouths are too small for whole cherries—in your laps."

"I think there was some love-making connected with that cherry scene," observed Viscount de Patatras, stroking his waxed moustache and eyeing the clerk rather superciliously.

"Well, there shall be some in this case if Madame likes," answered the clerk, nothing loth; and he clambered up the tree in no time, like a cat. "Now then, Madame, are you ready?" he cried from among the branches, and shook down the red fruit in a shower. The Viscount stooped to pick it up, but the Countess asked him why he did not climb the tree too? Being in uniform, he excused himself on the ground that his sword stood in his way; but this seemed to the Countess a lame pretence, and so it did to Turlupot, who suggested that the Captain would surely storm a breach with his sword on.

"Of course he would," exclaimed the Countess, gaily. "Up with you, Captain, or I shall think you are only afraid of soiling your red trousers and white gloves."

"Oh, but, Madame, the bark is quite wet from yesterday's rain," ejaculated Isabelle, pityingly.

"What does that matter? If the Captain were as skilled in gymnastics as M. Turlupot, he would have been up the topmost branch by this time, for he is never backward in showing off his accomplishments."

"Really, Madame, you are cruel," expostulated the officer.
 "Oh dear, no; but I like a soldier to be athletic," laughed the Countess. "My opinion is that you wear stays to give yourself a slim waist, and are afraid to burst them."

This insinuation was gall to Captain the Viscount de Patatras, who turned purple, as Frenchmen do when they are made to look ridiculous. Honour demanded that he should instantly prove he was not wearing stays; so, without removing his sword or gloves, he made a spring at the lowest tree-branch, hoisted himself by his wrists, and proceeded to clamber astride the branch. The Countess clapped her hands, and military prestige was on the point of being avenged when a painful incident occurred.

Toto, the poodle, was not accustomed to see strangers climb his master's cherry trees. He had just been saluting Madame de Sainte-Folye's Maltese after the courteous manner of dogs, when, espying the Captain struggling in mid-air, he uttered a growl and ran forward. The Countess, seeing a chance of fun, pointed at the officer with her parasol, and whispered, "Bite him!" an invitation which she had no need to repeat. With a rush, a snarl, and a whisk of his tail, Toto leaped aloft, pinned the Captain in the regions below the waist-band, and held on like a leech. The Captain roared; the dog, with his mouth full of red trouser, growled and tugged; Madame de Sainte-Folye, uttering peal upon peal of laughter, sank on to a bench, and even Isabelle was stricken with uncontrollable mirth. Then the dog and the Captain had it out together among the twigs and leaves. A fierce biter was that dog, and he soon succeeded in convincing that part of the pantaloons which he held that there was no reason for its sticking so close to the remainder of the garment; so it parted company, and Toto rolled to the ground. At the same moment Xavier Turlupot, clutching the Captain amicably by the scruff of the neck, gave him a haul which lifted him on to a higher branch.

"All's well that ends well," said he.

"That brute of a dog!" hissed the Captain; "but this is your fault, sir, and I shall hold you responsible."

"What's the damage?" grinned Turlupot, quite cool. "Send in the bill, and I'll tell the tailor to call again."

"This is not the time for joking," was the Captain's brief retort. "I shall require reparation."

"You surely don't want me to mend your trousers?" exclaimed Turlupot. "I'm willing, though. I'll call to Jeannette to bring me a needle and thread, and I'll sew you on some cherry leaves to hide the rent. Turn round that I may take your measure."

"Enough, sir! another word and I fling you down."

"Hush, hush! I won't have you two gentlemen quarrelling up there," cried Madame de Sainte-Folye at the foot of the tree; and, over-hearing more angry words, she stamped her foot, and compelled the dis-

putants to come down. But as soon as his boots touched the sward, Captain de Patatras beat a hasty and undignified retreat, being mortified to the soul, and furious against all mankind, principally clerks and women. So Xavier Turlupot had the field to himself. Madame de Sainte-Folye, accepting his proffered arm, thanked him, with tears in her eyes, for having afforded her so much amusement, and they strolled off to the strawberry-beds together, accompanied by Isabelle.

This was a great triumph to the clerk; for when a young man is left alone to amuse two members of the other sex, there must be something wrong about him if he cannot use his opportunity. Turlupot had the grace to pluck some large lettuce-leaves to serve as plates for the tempting fruit which he gathered, and all the while he kept up a fire of amiable pleasantries, which made the Countess merry, because the clerk's nasal voice was like the twanging of a jew's harp. Isabelle, however, who had never seen Turlupot under such gallant circumstances, was fairly surprised. The fact is true love does not tend to promote gymnastics or violent jocularities, so that Xavier had always been a trifle too serious in Isabelle's company; but now he frisked about the garden like a kangaroo in black, and gave Madame de Sainte-Folye the most favourable idea both of his agility and his wit.

"He is charming!" she exclaimed, as the clerk, having stripped the strawberry beds, ran off to the other end of the garden to gather a nose-gay for the Countess.

"I am sure he thinks so, Madame," replied Isabelle, demurely.

"And don't you?" smiled Madame de Sainte-Folye, who, knowing most things that went on in Ville-Joyeuse, was aware of this also, that Xavier Turlupot was paying a private suit to the Rector's daughter.

"I will, if you desire it, Madame," was Isabelle's placid answer.

"Oh, it has nothing to do with me; but it seems to me he is very good-tempered and brave. See how he bearded the Captain in the tree; I daresay the matter will end in a duel."

"A duel! oh!" exclaimed Isabelle, alarmed.

"No; I will see to that," laughed the Countess. "All the same, I hope M. Turlupot will compete for this gynæcology prize, for he would make a most facetious lecturer."

"He is going to compete, I believe."

"Well, that's famous. Have you seen his essay?"

"No; he refused to show it me," said Isabelle, naively, and forthwith blushed at this slip of her tongue.

"Never mind," prattled the Countess, with a twinkle in her eyes; "you will doubtless hear of it some day, my dear child. I wonder what M. Turlupot can have to say about our sex? Anyhow, as I am to be judge, he shall have the prize if he deserves it."

With this promise, which Xavier did not hear, Madame de Sainte-Folye kissed Isabelle again, and went back to her carriage, escorted by the clerk, who packed her in, and made her his very humble bow as she

drove off. On his return he did not jeopardise the good impression he had created through his recent jinks by joining Isabelle in the garden and having a fresh bout of words with her. He repaired to his study to write her some verses, and pondered for five minutes on what subject he should rhyme.

"I'll rhyme on her ribbons," said he. "The other day she was wearing mauve, and I told her it was the prettiest of all colours, so she put on cerise; and when I praised that she donned blue; now I have praised blue she will try something else; but what do I care? Whatever she wears is loveliest." And the amorous clerk gave expression to this sentiment in the following jingle:—

TO ISABELLE.

Mignonne, j'avais autrefois
Sur les couleurs, je le rois,
Un goût bien arbitraire.

J'aimais rose vif et bleu tendre,
Il les fallait, j'osais prétendre
A la blonde qui voulait plaire.

Mais aujourd'hui que toute belle
Vous montrez couleur nouvelle
Chaque fois que vous sortez;

A prononcer je désespère,
Car la couleur que je préfère,
C'est celle que vous portez.

Before I saw my love, I said,
"My queen shall dress in crimson red
If dark her eyes and hair;

If she have locks of golden hue,
Her robe shall be of tender blue,
Else she can scarce be fair."

I see her now, and day by day
It grows more hard for me to say
Which tint I most prefer.

Each day in some new dye she's drest,
And still to me that dye seems best;
Its beauty comes from her.

Isabelle found this madrigal next morning in the hollow of the oak, and for the first time she did not tear up the verses when she had read them.

III.

As the forty days allowed for the composition of the essays on Woman wore on, these effusions began to pour into Mr. Rector Boulottin's letter-box in alarming abundance. They came from all parts of France. The postman brought bundles of them at every delivery; and many of them, being regarded as valuables by their authors, were transmitted in registered parcels, for which the Rector had to sign receipts. The good man put all other work aside to attend to these essays; and soon he was obliged to engage two fresh clerks, who, along with Turlupot, spent their days in registering the manuscripts, docketing them, and preparing them for the perusal of Madame de Sainte-Folye.

Isabelle now met with opportunities for gratifying that curiosity which is one of the ornaments of the female mind; for, as essays were flying all over the house, it was easy for her to abstract a few every night and take them to her room to read. What she learned from them

mightily surprised her; for the authors one and all dealt with their subject in a patronising style, indicating their comfortable belief in the superiority of the male sex. Some affected to pity Woman, others abused her; all professed the most intimate acquaintance with her weaknesses, and none did her justice. As for girls, the authors unanimously and impatiently described them as the silliest, vainest, greediest, most mischievous creatures ever conjured up for the worry of mankind.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Isabelle, in the deepest disgust, as she flung down her twenty-fifth essay; "and to think that when these men meet us girls they are always bowing and scraping and paying compliments! Oh, the perfidious race!"

And hereat she clenched her tiny fists and laughed derision. You see this was an unsophisticated young lady, who had hitherto taken all the current small coin of social verbiage for sterling metal; but now her eyes were open, and she was resolved that nothing should ever induce her again to believe in the compliments paid to other girls. As to those breathed in her own ears, why if men called her pretty, she could credit that, since her looking-glass said it too; and if she were praised for her wit, grace, and accomplishments, she could afford to look on these tributes also as mere truisms, not as compliments. But for the rest, let no man think to impose upon her in future, and Xavier Turlupot least of all. She found it quite impossible, however, to obtain a glimpse at Turlupot's essay; and the day came at length when this mysterious document, neatly rolled and tied with a pink favour, was to be carried by its author to Madame de Sainte-Folys's mansion. The clerk beautified himself for this occasion with a new suit of clothes and some hair-oil; and Isabelle met him as he was going out. She had lain in wait for him; for it seemed to her that of late he had rather shunned her society, and she desired to give him a piece of her mind—the least agreeable piece, of course.

"Well, is that the composition which is to make your fortune?" she inquired, pointing mockingly to the roll with the tip of her parasol.

"That's the paper in question, Mademoiselle—much at your service," he replied with provoking cheerfulness.

"I wish you joy of it," she said, with set lips; "but I do hope you have not had the matchless effrontery to write ill of us girls—that would be too comical. Oh, my goodness!"

Turlupot merely smirked, so Isabelle went on: "I know of what deceitful stuff you men are made. Before our faces you describe us as the sweetest beings; we rhyme to love, dove, and the realms above. Our eyes are like stars, our smiles are sunbeams (here she mimicked the voice of the clerk in his pleading moments), and with a frown we can plunge you into abysses of despair; but once we are not present to overhear what you say, or see what you write, you tell a different story. I call it cowardly, I do, to hide your real sentiments in that way."

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle, it is time for me to be going," said Turlupot, politely.

"Go; nobody stops you. You see you cannot defend yourself against my accusation."

"Yes; I think you the divinest of girls on paper and off it."

"I do not believe a word of your foolish flatteries."

"That only shows that modesty is one among the many gems to which your qualities may be compared."

Isabelle could say nothing to this; but, the street door being opened, she caught sight of Viscount de Patatras ambling by in a new pair of red pantaloons, and on a bay charger. He lifted his white glove to his kepi with an uneasy sort of civility, and coloured, for his adventure with the poodle was still fresh in his recollection; and the sight of Turlupot, whom he would have liked to strangle, was repulsive to him. Isabelle blushed too; and the clerk, misinterpreting her confusion, waxed suddenly jealous.

"So I see your resentment against men does not extend to us all," he remarked. "I hear you have been dancing with that puppy at some recent balls?"

"What if I did?" cried Isabelle, firing up. "There is to be another ball at the Prefecture in a day or two, and I will dance with him again."

"Don't take Toto with you, then, or the Captain would bolt."

"I won't take you either, or the Captain might cut your ears off. If it had not been for the Countess's intervention you would have been a pretty object by this time."

"Tut, tut! If the Captain tries conclusions with me, I'll cut his waxed moustaches off, and force him to swallow them." Saying which Xavier Turlupot clapped his new hat on his head with a violence which stove it in, for it was a cheap hat, and he strode down the street brandishing his essay furiously like a cheese-knife. But Isabelle was pleased at this outburst of temper.

"Well, I have found out the way to make him angry—that's one comfort," she reflected. "It seems, then, men have their weak sides too, though they do rail so conceitedly at ours!" And she tripped indoors, humming some words of an old song, whose burden was *Tra la, la*.

Xavier Turlupot marched, fuming, towards the Prefecture, and as he advanced he noticed a great animation pervading the streets. Groups of chattering women hung about; bill-stickers were covering the walls with large placards; and boys were crying special editions of the local newspapers. The reason of all this hubbub was that certain of the candidates, thinking to better their chances by an appeal to the popular voice, had caused their essays to be printed and circulated, some on posters, some in journals, which the crowds perused in a spirit not exempt from gaiety. Other candidates, again, imagining that the prize would be awarded on this very day when the entries closed, had foolishly travelled from far-off cities to learn their fate; and last, but by no means least, a

powerful female deputation of Women's Rights advocates had arrived in Ville-Joyeuse to urge that the gynæcological professor should be a man pledged to all the dogmas of the Women's Enfranchisement creed. These ladies were for the most part English, Americans, and Russians—there was not a Frenchwoman among them; and they carried banners enscribed with many a startling device, denouncing the subjection of the so-called weak sex.

Turlupot arrived at the Prefecture just as this interesting procession debouched from a side street, escorted by a mob of awestricken French boys, and no less mystified policemen. It contained some damsels who were pretty, and might have been trusted to wring what rights they pleased from the Tyrant Man, without being assisted by the Legislature; while the rest were of a kind whom man would gladly have endowed with the right to bear arms, and honoured with the foremost rank in a battle. Turlupot stood aside to let the demonstration pass, and they charged up the steps of the Prefecture with a great rustling of skirts, and the stamp of a resolute purpose on their countenances.

The clerk followed them. Up he went to the Prefectoral reception room, where M. de Sainte-Folye, with his glass in his eye, and his wife by his side, stood waiting to receive the deputation. Being a shy man, he disliked this task; but he had evidently been coached by Madame as to what he should say, and he said it in stilted official sentences, which conveyed a snub. The Countess was dressed in black, and looked very prim whilst her husband spoke. A Frenchwoman does not like to see members of her own sex take part in public affairs, and the Countess was for the nonce an altogether different person from the merry lady who had gone cherry-gathering with Turlupot. When the Prefect had finished speaking, she gave a freezing bow as a hint to the deputation to depart; and they flustered out, abashed like poultry who have been played upon with garden-hose. Then Turlupot remained with a manuscript under his arm, and the Countess turned upon him in a royal rage.

"What; you too come to worry me!" she exclaimed; "how much longer is this foolish pleasantry going to last?"

"But, Madame; you gave me your orders to bring my essay in person," answered the clerk, astonished.

"I am sick of essays," cried the Countess, with a petulance which drove the Prefect, her husband, slinking towards the door. "I have been reading scores of them, and have torn them all up. Every one of those papers was offensive, witless, idiotic—the writers knowing no more about women than monkeys about asparagus. Come into my boudoir and see how I have dealt with them."

She pivoted on her high heels, trailed two yards of silk skirt after her, and pushed open the door of her "sulking bower." A fine sight met Xavier Turlupot's gaze. The carpet, the sofas, the fender, were all littered with pages of foolscap torn into shreds; and in the midst of these ruins the pink and curly-headed Abbé Gentilleux sat on a low

stool perusing other manuscripts, and dismally slicing them with a pair of scissors as soon as he had dipped into their contents.

"There, see the Abbé Gentilleux undergoing punishment," ejaculated the Countess, pointing at the priest. "Would you believe that he, too, had the base ingratitude to write against us?"

"Oh, Madame, you put too hasty a construction on my remarks!" simpered the young Abbé as he stood up, looking deeply disgraced.

"What astounds me is the audacity of the man," continued the Countess, unheeding him. "What have we women ever done to deserve his sarcasms? We pet him, give him nice dinners, work slippers and fall-stools for him, we confess our sins to him, which men never do, and yet he is not satisfied! And to make things worse, he sends in his essay anonymously, not daring to sign it; but I detected him by the style, though he had disguised his handwriting—that will teach him!"

"Pardon me, Madame, I used but a venial subterfuge," humbly pleaded the rosy ecclesiastic.

"Subterfuges are only venial when not found out," answered Madame de Sainte-Folye, drily. "As a punishment you will have to go on reading those manuscripts until I tell you to stop, and every paper that rails against women must be cut up. As for you, M. Turlupot, if you have taken the conventional view of our sex, you had better hand over your manuscript to M. l'Abbé's scissors without delay."

"By no means, Madame," replied the clerk, grasping his precious composition all the tighter; "I much wish you to read my observations. I think you will find I have dealt with your charming sex in all fairness."

"Ah, that would be strange indeed!" ejaculated the Countess, incredulously.

"Do me the honour of satisfying yourself by a glance," said the clerk, unrolling his manuscript and presenting it with a bow.

The Countess hesitated a moment. She scrutinised Xavier Turlupot fixedly, but his eyes did not quail.

"Well, you are running a risk," said she. "If you have written anything displeasing to me, I will never see you again; so for your own sake you had better answer a few questions. Is there anything in your essay about our diastaltic nerves, or impressionable organisms? Have you stated that we are silly for wearing stays, high heels, and chignons, or for putting on hair dye, cold cream, and violet powder?"

"I have stated no such thing," declared the Clerk, stoutly.

"Have you made any rapid jokes about widows and mothers-in-law?"

"I consider such subjects far too serious for joking," replied Turlupot.

"Have you pretended that a woman's 'No' means 'Yes?'—that we can't keep secrets?—that we never confess our true age?—and that we like a man all the better if he makes us jealous and gives us a beating now and then?"

"All those are heresies against which I protest by my soul," cried the clerk with his hand on his heart.

"Well then, sit down and read," said the Countess, resignedly, and she sank on to the sofa; "but mind, the Abbé will be watching you from that stool with his scissors, and at the first sign from me he will snip your paper to pieces. So be careful."

Now to give an idea of Xavier Turlupot's essay one ought to quote it, but this would require too much space. It was a pretty long composition, and took an hour in perusal. It was also a highly original production, for, instead of dissecting the idiosyncrasies of women, it dealt chiefly with men; and herein did Turlupot evince his wit that he handled his own sex most treacherously. He depicted man in his relations with women—presumptuous, foolish, mendacious, faithless often, and always selfish. Such little vanities as women are reproached with, he showed to be equally the characteristics of man; and against this bearded, smoking, strutting, and bibulous creature's egotism he set off the many virtues and graces in which woman excels him. What these are any lady can imagine for herself, so there is no need to enumerate them here. But, in sum, this essay operated very soothingly on the nerves of Madame de Sainte-Folye.

During the first five minutes of the reading she reclined on the sofa with a mistrustful glance and toying at her watch-chain, while the Abbé Gentilleux held his scissors on his outstretched finger and thumb as if he expected every moment to receive a signal to make use of them. After five minutes the Countess ceased to toy with her chain, and a little later she smiled. Then she laughed outright, and the Abbé laid his scissors aside. Turlupot had a style of reading highly conducive to merriment. His voice spanned all the octave between the melodious sound of a fog-whistle and the dulcet notes of the screech-owl. When the Countess laughed he did so likewise—like a cockatoo, his very hair, ears, and eyebrows all bristling up together in amused commotion; and presently he and his hostess had a regular fit of hilarity over some descriptive passages in which Turlupot had sketched some of the male notabilities of Ville-Joyeuse—among them M. de Patatras and the Abbé Gentilleux there present. During this outburst the rosy priest felt bad, as the Americans say. But Madame de Sainte-Folye was delighted, and on the conclusion of the essay she clapped her hands and said: "Bravo, M. Turlupot; a man who knows our sex so accurately as you do is alone worthy to lecture upon us."

It must be repeated that there was very little about the sex in the essay; but ladies state a case in their own way. Just at this moment the footman entered to say that M. Rector Boulottin and the Academical Council were downstairs craving an audience. "Show them up," cried the Countess. "Their arrival is well timed, for they shall hear my decision about the prize."

The Academical Council, nine strong as on the former occasion, had

come to represent that there were three cartloads of compositions waiting in the Prefectoral court-yard below, and, in view of Madame's being unwilling to peruse them all, they volunteered to divide this labour amongst a number of erudite committees who would report.

"No, thank you," answered the Countess, peremptorily; "I have made up my mind that M. Xavier Turlupot is to have the prize, and I introduce him to you now as your Professor on Gynæcee—Gynæco—or whatever you call it."

"But surely, Madame, we must examine the other essays," stammered the Rector, startled by his clerk's good luck not less than by the Countess's disregard for the rules of competition.

"There is no need to read them," replied the Countess; "I have read enough. Everybody writes against women except M. Turlupot, who treats us nicely."

"Perhaps that is hardly a reason," grumbled the Professor of Coptic.

"What?" exclaimed the Countess, turning on him in scorn. "Will you please answer me this, sir? If you had to appoint a Professor of Poetry, would you choose a man who abhorred verses?"

"No-o," was the discomfited reply.

"And you, sir," staring at the Professor of Astronomy; "do you think a man must hate sunshine like an owl to be an astronomer?"

"No-o, Madame, surely."

"And you, sir" (here she glanced severely at the Palæontologist); "is it your opinion that your chair can only be properly filled by a person who abominates bones?"

The whole nine agreed that the conscientious palæontologist must love bones. "Well then, so it is with women," ejaculated the Countess triumphantly; "the man who lectures on Gynæcee—Gynæco—must love us. However, if you like to read the three cartloads of essays, and discover one nearly as good as M. Turlupot's, its author shall have a second prize."

"But we may discover one or several better than M. Turlupot's," submitted two or three of the professors.

"Enough!" said Madame de Sainte-Folye, frowning and stamping her foot. "Nothing can be better than what is best, and I have pronounced that M. Turlupot's essay is the best. So good day."

The Academical Body vanished like a flock of rooks when they hear the click of a gun barrel.

IV.

Xavier Turlupot became suddenly an important personage.

In a country where feminine influence is exceptionally strong he enjoyed the distinction of being the Frenchman who knew more than all others about women. He ranked beside that eminent moralist M.

Alexandre Dumas the younger; and that lady-beloved author, M. Octave Feuillet, hailed him as a brother. His name was flatteringly mentioned in the British House of Commons during a debate on the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill; and it was assumed that his teaching was about to inaugurate a new era in the relations between the sexes. The throne of the Tyrant Man seemed to tremble on its base.

In the course of a week after his appointment the new professor received several hundreds of letters of congratulation, advice, and supplication from fair individuals, and also some graver memorials from fair associations, who submitted divers proposals to his philogynæcal consideration:—

1st. A proposal for codifying the enactments of all countries relating to women, with a view to inducing the female subjects of the less favoured States to emigrate towards more gallant climes.

2nd. A draft of legislation for abolishing the Salic Law and for authorising actions for breach of promise of marriage which have not hitherto been introduced into France.

And 3rd. A project for establishing in America a polyandrous community where things should be managed in opposition to the Mormon plan, viz. each woman be allowed to have a throng of husbands.

These were a few schemes among the many; but they showed in what a sober spirit M. Turlupot was expected to enter upon his new duties. Meanwhile the professor's portrait appeared in the illustrated papers; he stepped into a salary of 20,000 francs a year, with prospective pension claims; and the Female Rights Deputation, before leaving Ville-Joyeuse, honoured him with a visit and presented him with an album of the photographs of the most elderly members of their association.

All this glory might have turned the head of a vain man, and it certainly had an effect on the heart of Mademoiselle Isabelle, who saw her lover's moral stature raised by a cubit or two. Xavier Turlupot had resigned his situation as clerk to M. Boulottin; but he remained in the Rector's house for the present as a distinguished guest, and it seemed to the Rector's daughter that he looked much more imposing and less ugly than before. She began to be more civil to him; but he, to punish her for having erst despised him, affected to treat her with punctilious coldness, which was only his joke as usual. Thereat the maiden's spirit rose, and she proceeded to flirt outrageously with the Viscount de Patatras. Whenever she got a chance of praising that warrior in Turlupot's hearing she did so without stint; and at the grand Prefectoral ball, which was given in honour of the gynæcological contest, she danced twice with him and took his arm to supper. It was then Turlupot's turn to be deeply irritated, to bite his nails, roll his eyes, and vow vengeance; and one morning Isabelle found the following spiteful missive in the hollow of the oak where she went every day to look for letters, as to a Poste Restante:—

TO AN INCONSTANT ONE.

I was almost in love, Isabelle,
 I was almost in love, dear, with you ;
 'Twas before I had learn'd you thus well,
 In the days when I thought you were true.

If a voice like the voice of the dove,
 And a tint like the tint of the shell,
 If such gifts could awaken my love,
 I had loved you, I think, Isabelle.

But I care not for trifles like these ;
 I am cast in a different mould :
 Give me arts that for ever can please,
 And beauties that never grow old.

When the eyes have outlasted their blaze,
 And Old Time reft its dye from the hair,
 Then a true woman's constancy stays ;
 But in your case it never was there.

Yet think not I'll wail for my fate,
 Or wish I had never been born :
 I hold you too cheap for my hate ;
 I count you too light for my scorn.

So I'll waste not a sigh nor a tear ;
 For my dead love I'll toll not a knell :
 But I'll strive to forget you, my dear,
 And I'll love some one else, Isabelle.

There was naturally a pretty scene when Isabelle had read this. She tore up the unmanly libel and trod on it ; then she sat down on a bench and began to weep, for she could not bear to think that when time had undyed her hair there would be nothing left of her worth praising. But Turlupot was concealed in some lilac bushes, to watch the effect of his poetry ; and when he saw Isabelle crying, he came forth half penitent. "So ho," thought he, "then her indifference to me was all a pretence !"

At sight of the professor, Isabelle started up and hid her handkerchief away, as if she could conceal her tears with it. Her pretty pouting lips and moist blue eyes made her look very winsome, and it smote Xavier Turlupot's heart that he had grieved her ; but then why did she behave so waywardly towards *him* ?

"Ah, it's you !" said she, with a sneer. "So you have come to tease me, and you have been spying upon me—that's just like you."

"How do you know it's like me, since I've never spied upon you before ?" responded Turlupot, coolly.

"A man who would write such verses as those is capable of anything," said Isabelle.

"How do you know they were addressed to you ?"

"Oh, my goodness ! did one ever hear such quibbling ? Why, my name was on them !"

"So it was. I had forgotten that. Anyhow they only prove that I love you?"

"Thank you for such love! How do you treat the people you hate, then?"

"I let them alone. I don't think them worth vexing."

"Well, I wish you would class me among the hated. Now that you are rich, you have begun to give yourself airs; and I suppose you think I am awestricken by your professorship and your money. But I don't care that for either (she snapped her fingers). And, just to teach you to be conceited, I promise you that so long as you are rich, I will have nothing more to say to you—nothing. I liked you ten times better when you were poor."

"Forgive me if I never perceived it."

"I can't help it, if people are blind."

"If I thought it, I would fling all my money away."

"Do it then."

"No, I won't; it would be too foolish," said Turlupot.

"Of course it would," replied Isabelle, mockingly. "Well, mark what I say." And she ran indoors, turning round on the threshold to make a face at him. He, forgetful of his professorial dignity, gave her full change for this impertinence by making at least half-a-dozen faces at her; after which he sauntered off, whistling.

Turlupot did not attach overmuch importance to the threats of an angry young lady; but he could not help reflecting that his 20,000 francs a year, without Isabelle to share them, would be of small value to him. This thought kept trotting in his mind during all the work he had to go through as a preliminary to commencing his lectures. He was obliged to buy himself a red gown and mortar-cap like other professors; he had to order a complete library of all the books, ancient and modern, which treat of women—for so had old Joquelin decided in his will; and he had to attend to the fitting up and furnishing of his lecture-room. In this last particular he was kindly assisted by Madame de Sainte-Folye, who wanted the lecture-room to be very nice. She suggested a thick Turkey carpet, some comfortable quilted arm-chairs, and she desired the walls to be adorned with portraits of "all the good women in history." "First we will hang up a likeness of Lucretia Borgia," said she.

"Why, she poisoned her four husbands," remarked Xavier Turlupot, with a start.

"Never mind that; she knew how to rule, and Donizetti has set her adventures to music: besides, Tarquin behaved abominably to her," replied the Countess, whose notions of history were not as clear as the waters of an Artesian well.

"Good; and whom else shall we hang up?" asked Turlupot, resignedly.

"Why, Aspasia and Petrarch's Laura."

"But they were not married."

"I suppose they never found time . . . but they were good women."

"Shall we add Xanthippe to the list?"

"Who was she?"

"She used to manage her husband with a broomstick."

"Some men will accept no other kind of guidance: I daresay I should have got on well with her. But now you must have the portrait of that lady who invented needles. I forget her name, but she was the model of a housewife, and died of a snake-bite."

"Do you mean Cleopatra?" said Turlupot.

"Yes, Cleopatra—that's the name," answered Madame de Sainte-Folye.

It will be seen that the Prefect's wife maintained an unabated interest in her *protégé*; and indeed, as the time approached when the young professor was to deliver his inaugural lecture, she concocted programmes for giving the ceremony a suitable *éclat*. For awhile other ladies in Ville-Joyeuse co-operated with her; and Turlupot, though so ill-favoured a swain, was mentioned in terms of endearment wherever two or three of the fair sex were gathered together—a circumstance which much disgusted husbands, brothers, lovers, and other such.

But in all things human there is a reaction, and Turlupot's popularity was destined to ebb as suddenly as it had flowed; and this owing to a calamity for which he was not directly responsible.

It began to be noticed that weddings had altogether ceased in Ville-Joyeuse!

Young men and maidens were so busy in disputing over the comparative merits of the two sexes, that they grew shy of espousing each other. The precious hours of youth that should be spent in courtship were wasted in wrangles. Epigrams took the place of love ditties, and teasing words were exchanged where there should have been only cooings and muffled laughter. It was worse among married couples. Wives disserted on the ethics of matrimony, instead of attending to the boiled beef; and husbands, who were pestered at finding long diatribes against women (the effusions of rejected candidates) in their newspapers, voted gynecology an immense bore. Taking Xavier Turlupot as their scape-goat, these gentlemen cursed the new professor roundly, which made the women stand up for him all the more. But in their heart of hearts the women became soured too against the man whom they accused of having estranged them from other men, so that gradually there set in against Turlupot a strong under-current of ill-will, which only required some accident to manifest itself. Madame de Sainte-Folye was too capricious a lady not to be carried away in her turn by the tide. So long as she heard only that the market-girls, the clergy, and match-making mammas were bemoaning the disrepute into which marriage had fallen—so long as she was regaled with stories of hen-pecked husbands or heard the voices of street boys trolling anti-feminine ballads abroad—she could afford to laugh; but she bounded like a young cat one day when it was hinted

to her that her perspicacity had been at fault, and that in patronising Turlupot she might, after all, have been only cherishing a viper who would bite her.

"See," said these tattlers. "This man has shown so much ability in winning the professorship, that he may display equal nerve in keeping it. How do you know that, when once installed, he will not fall to abusing our sex as all the rest do. There is more popularity to be earned amongst his fellow men by deriding us than by taking our part!"

When Madame de Sainte-Folye heard this, the wrath was kindled within her, and she sent for Turlupot to come at once, post haste. He came, and she eyed him askance.

"It is an understood thing, Mr. Professor, that you will give me beforehand the texts of all the lectures you intend to deliver," said she pointedly.

"If you like, Madame," answered the gynæcologist.

"And you will only say to your audiences such things as I please?"

"Oh, that is another pair of shoes!"

"What do you mean by 'another pair of shoes?'"

"I mean that I am bound by the terms of M. Joquelin's will to say certain things, and I must be independent."

"Even at the risk of offending me?"

"You are too amiable to be offended because I do my duty."

"There is no other duty here but to obey me; do you hear that, sir?" cried the Prefect's wife. "If you are not satisfied, I must beg you to resign."

"Oh, no, I shan't do that—catch me!"

"Then you intend to defy me?"

"Look here, Madame," said Turlupot, thinking to turn off this storm with a jest. "If you bully me, I'll lecture upon you—you'll see if I don't. I'll point out to my fellow townsmen what a sweet thing it is to be governed by a pretty despot in mittens."

This deplorable sally sealed poor Turlupot's fate. The Countess dismissed him from her presence, calling him "traitor;" and from that hour the professor of gynæcology had no more determined enemy than Madame de Sainte-Folye.

She soon showed it by speaking everywhere of his ingratitude; and, as her word was law in Ville-Joyeuse, the crowd of those who added their accusing voices to hers became exceeding great. Pent-up spite, envy, malice, burst out in all directions, and Xavier Turlupot found himself much in the position of those Prime Ministers who, borne on the shoulders of the mob to-day, are pelted with eggs to-morrow. In the cafés among men, and at family firesides where women babble, he was denounced as an enemy of the public peace whose functions were to consist in setting the sexes by the ears. Lovers became reconciled, husbands and wives forgot their tiffs, and sealed in conjugal embraces a compact to

"put down Turlupot." Nor was this all, for the good Bishop of Ville-Joyeuse withdrew the light of his countenance from the sinner; and the rosy Abbé Gentilleux, glad to pay off old scores, preached a cathedral sermon, in which he significantly hinted how the Inquisition used to deal in old days with persons who set themselves up, professing to know more than others.

Isabelle observed that her lover's nose was conspicuously lengthening owing to the cares which made his cheeks shrink. He found no one to stand by him; and this evoked the pity of the girl, who, seeing him so disconsolate, would have extended the hand of friendship had he sought it. But he did not; and revenged himself for being sent to Coventry by vowing that he would shortly make his voice heard so that it would resound all over the land. Sinister rumours were flying about, for it was said that a cabal of market-women would invade the lecture-room on the opening day of term, and force the gynæcological professor from his pulpit. But it was no use seeking to intimidate Xavier Turlupot by such threats as these. He remained firm as a ramrod, and had lost nothing of his nerve when the great day arrived, and he stood clothed in his scarlet cap and gown, ready to start for the college.

What a day it was!—a day never to be forgotten in Ville-Joyeuse! It was on a Thursday, when the markets were held; and from an early hour the drovers and salesmen, the fishwives and dairymaids, the policemen, street boys, flower-girls, and strolling musicians gathered about in clusters, unmindful of their ordinary business. Some oxen broke loose in the confusion and ran among the vegetable stalls, while pigs, fowls, and rabbits got somehow mixed up together in the shambles where the calves were bleating. The voices of the market women were shriller than day than they had ever been.

Twelve o'clock clanged out from the cathedral steeple, and this was the hour when the term was to be formally opened by the different professors entering into their lecture-rooms. The excitement in the streets was intense; and when Xavier Turlupot appeared in the market place with his red gown ballooning behind him, and his square cap planted firmly on his head, like the chapter of a Doric column, a rush of the populace took place to get a view of him. But he looked fierce as a lean wolf, and the spectators fell back in two rows a little timid and not venturing to express their feelings otherwise than with the tongue.

"Oh, the ugly man!" exclaimed some of the girls.

"Well, he's a beauty to be sure," chorused the women.

"Go it, Turlupot!" cried some workmen, humorously.

But the professor passed on heedless of these barkings, and so reached the college. Now here a great throng of students was assembled; and indeed all the other professors, finding their lecture-rooms deserted, had descended into the court-yard, to watch the arrival of their learned brother and gloat over his discomfiture. Arrayed in red and black gowns, they were massed in a corner of the yard, and were staring and

nudging each other. The Rector alone, being responsible for the good order of academical proceedings, flustered about with his mace-bearers, beseeching everybody to be quiet. M. Boulottin liked his ex-clerk, and through all the latter's recent unpopularity had remained passively faithful to him; so now, when Turlupot arrived, this honest official caught him by the arm, and almost pushed him into the lecture-room. "There!" gasped he; "I often warned you against worldly ambition, but you wouldn't hear me. Now you must shift for yourself."

Turlupot climbed into his rostrum, and was instantly greeted with a storm of yells, hisses, cat-calls, and some mingling of applause from a densely-packed audience of students, who rose in tier upon tier to the number of five hundred or so. Party feeling was pretty equally divided; for while some were anxious to hear what the professor had to say, others were intent only on making a row. It is probable, however, that the quieter section would have succeeded in obtaining silence at last, had not the rioters been opportunely reinforced by some allies from the other sex. Scarcely had Turlupot removed his cap when the folding-doors of the room were shoved violently open, and a mob of market women flowed in, brandishing mops, brooms, and carrots, and screaming, "Down with him!"

"Out with the hags!" cried the orderly students.

"Let them fight it out!" roared the disorderly ones, with loud laughter.

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you for protection!" shouted Turlupot; but a deftly hurled carrot, which struck him on the mouth, checked his utterance; and the next moment he was collared by a pair of sturdy fishwives, who sought to drag him down, raving, "We'll teach you what women can do!"

Heron a glorious scrimmage ensued. The orderly students, rallying round their professor, were beaten back with the mops and vegetables, and with the books of their rowdier comrades thrown as missiles. Turlupot, having no other weapons but his inkstand, divided its contents impartially between the countenances of the two fishwives; but when he had done this, he had spent his ammunition, without in any way bettering his case. Two formidable slaps, one on each ear, punished his pugnacity; and, to make matters worse, the windows of the class-room were now opened, and a laughing, squealing, pink-fisted bevy of peasant girls jumped down among the benches to help the riper women. The orderly students, who might have fought against these latter, were disarmed at sight of the girls, and fled quadrivious. Then Turlupot was left defenceless; and seeing there was nothing for it but to run, he did run as never professor ran before. Catching up his gown as women do their skirts in muddy weather, he charged through the door, leaping over benches, brooms, and women whom he knocked over, and made for the street. The girls followed him, however, throwing eggs, vegetables, and taunts; and so keen was their pursuit, that the gynecologist

was glad to escape lynching by tumbling into the first house on his road which happened to be the chief hotel in Ville-Joyeuse—the “Tête de Bœuf.” There, sinking on a chair, he panted for a glass of water and the police. “I know women now,” added he: “they are furies.”

It was just at this moment that a fly, coming from the railway station, ploughed its way through the human surf, and reached the door of that very “Tête de Bœuf.”

Three persons, of sunburnt, exotic aspect, evidently much astonished by the riot they had witnessed through the fly windows, alighted, and asked for rooms. The one was a stout, strapping lady, with grey hair and a lemon face and eyeballs; and the two others a pair of thin, bearded, brown young men, as much alike as two cakes of gingerbread. The hotel-keeper, who had just stowed away Xavier Turlupot in the wine-cellar to prevent the mob from getting at him, came forward to greet the strangers.

“A suite of rooms,” demanded the stout lady, in a domineering voice; and she added, “rooms for Madame Joquelin and her two sons.”

The hotel-keeper gave a start. “What, Madame? May I inquire if you are any relation to our late lamented townsman, M. Joquelin?”

“Why, of course; I’m his wife, and these are his sons,” exclaimed the stout lady. “He left me twenty-five years ago in Bolivia, and these twins were born six months after his departure, so that he never saw them. We heard lately that he had died, leaving all his fortune among strangers; but that won’t do, and we have come to claim our own.”

“Ah, that dishes the gynæcologist!” remarked the hotel-keeper.

“What do you say?” asked the stout lady.

“Nothing, Madame,” replied the publican.

V.

Yes, the gynæcologist was dished. It will be remembered that the deceased Joquelin had alluded in his will to his third wife, whom he had deserted, and who, he piously hoped, had not died of yellow fever. Providence had not only spared the good lady, but had consoled her with a pair of gingerbread sons, who, according to French law, were entitled to share with their mother all their father’s property. French law is formal in such matters. When a man has children, he must not bequeath his money away from them; and, by merely proving their identity, the claimants from Bolivia set old Joquelin’s will at naught.

So Xavier Turlupot lost his professorship and his salary, and was fain to resume his situation as M. Boulottin’s clerk. All he had gained from his brief honours was a black eye, which obliged him to wear a patch for ten days, and did not improve his appearance.

But stay—he got something else, for he won the heart of his master’s daughter.

Isabelle, pitying his fall and feeling for his loneliness, gave him to understand by some kind words of sympathy that she was not indisposed towards him as of old; and Turlupot, who required but little encouragement, retaliated forthwith by offering her his hand.

The love scene occurred in the garden one day when the autumn sun was shining and the grass was all covered with sere leaves. Lifting his patch, and gazing tenderly on the girl through the eye which had been black but was now custard-coloured, Turlupot took Isabelle's little fingers and said: "Will you accept this hand, Belle, though there is nothing in it?"

"I will accept it *because* there is nothing in it," replied the maiden, stoutly.

"You are an angel," ejaculated Turlupot; and there was a pause, during which something occurred which made Isabelle redden and cry "Don't!" "But what will your father say?" added the clerk.

"He will object at first, but give in at length, as he always does," said Isabelle.

"And your mother?"

"She will object too, and then assist me to make papa give in."

"Ah, I see every one gives in to you," observed Turlupot; "and I suppose I shall have to do the same."

"You won't be the worse for it," replied the pretty maid. "It's the best thing a man can do to give way to women—or girls."

"Pleased with a Feather."

A MURKY London winter afternoon is not exactly a good opportunity for the pursuit of natural history. The snow lies thick on the pavement outside, half melted into muddy slush; while the fog penetrates through the cracks in the woodwork, and the sun struggles feebly athwart the thick yellow sheet which shuts off his rays from the lifeless earth. If I wish to go on a botanical or entomological excursion to-day, I must perforce content myself with a "Voyage autour de ma Chambre." So I rise listlessly from my easy chair; perambulate the drawing-room in a sulky mood; peer at the Japanese fans on the mantel-shelf; re-arrange for the twentieth time those queer little pipkins we brought on our last vacation ramble from Morlaix; pull about my wife's old Chelsea in a savage fit of tidiness; and finally relapse upon the sofa with a fixed determination to be inconsolably miserable for the rest of the day. Evidently I am suffering from that mysterious British epidemic, the spleen, and I may be shortly expected to plunge incontinently over Waterloo Bridge.

Meanwhile, I find a momentary solace in the Indian cushion which lies under my head. A feather is just pushing its sharper end through the Morocco leather groundwork, between those gorgeous masses of gold, silver, and crimson embroidery; which feather I forthwith begin to egg out, by dexterous side pressure, with admirable industry, worthy of a better cause. My wife, looking up from her crewels, mutters something inarticulate about someone who finds some mischief still for idle hands to do; but her obdurate husband pretends inattention, and finally succeeds in catching the feather-end between his finger and thumb. Now that I have successfully pulled it out, I begin to examine it closely, and bethink myself of how, in brighter summer weather, I dissected a daisy for the benefit of such among the readers of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE as honoured me with their kind attention. I shall take a closer look at this feather, and see if it, too, may not serve as the text for a humble lay-sermon concerning the nature and development of feathers in general, and the birds or human beings who wear them.

For the interesting point about a feather is really this, that it *grew*. It was not made in a moment, like a bullet poured red-hot into a mould: its little airy plumes, branched like a fern into tiny waving filaments, were developed by slow steps, piece after piece, and spikelet after spikelet. And what is true of this particular bit of down which I hold in my fingers, trembling like gossamer at every breath and every

pulse, is also true of plumage as a whole in the history of animal evolution. To my mind that great fact, that everything has grown, throws a fresh and wonderful interest into every little object which we can pick up about our fields or our houses. The old view of creation, which represented it as single and instantaneous, made each creature or each organ seem like a mere piece of moulded mechanism, with no history, no puzzle, and no recognisable relation to its like elsewhere. But the new view, which represents creation as continuous, progressive, and regular, teaches us to see in every species or every structure a result of previous causes, an adaptation to pre-existing needs. Thus we are enabled to find in a flower, a fruit, or a feather, innumerable clues which lead us back to its ultimate origin, and give delightful exercise to our intelligence in tracing out the probable steps by which this complex whole has been produced.

I often figure to myself the difference between the two ways of regarding natural objects, by means of the initial letters in an ordinary volume, and the initial letters which Mr. Linley Sambourne draws for us so cleverly in *Punch*. Look at the big O of a newspaper leader—it is just a mass of metal, poured into a circular or oval type. But look at the big O which the ingenious artist tricks out for us with social allusions or political innuendoes, and what a world of amusement you will find if you take the trouble to spell out all its quaint devices. See how every curl has some playful hit at a noble lord or an honourable member; how every detail smiles with gentle satire at some passing event or some universal topic. Not a touch but has a meaning for those who will seek it; not a careless little smudge in the corner but brims over with deep purpose and infinite wealth of covert mirth. So it is, I think, with flowers, fruits, or feathers, when once we have learnt to look for their hidden hints. This little twist points back to some strange fact in the past history of the species; that unobtrusive spur or knob is the clue to whole volumes of botanical or zoological lore. Not a detail but tells of the origin and development of the whole; not a tuft, a spot, or a streak but teems with information for the seeker who has found out the method of seeking aright.

Again, to vary our simile, let us visit some ancient British earth-work or Roman camp. If we go as mere rustics, we see in it all nothing more than a broken ridge of earth on the summit of a rolling down. We are not even sure whether it is really the handiwork of man, or some queer natural formation like the Devil's Dyke, the Giant's Causeway, and the parallel roads of Glen Roy. But if we go under the guidance of some skilled archaeologist, what a flood of light he is able to throw over its history and its meaning. This row of strongholds, he tells us, formed the frontier line, say between the Welsh of Dorset and the Welsh of Devon. Here the Durotriges and Damnonii, the men of the water-vale and the men of the hills, faced one another from their opposite heights. Sweep round your eye in a semicircle along this series of

points, overhanging the valley of the Axe, and you will find every higher summit crowned with a "castle," a rude earthwork raised by the men whom our fathers drove out of the land. That was their Balkan or Suleiman line, their cordon of border forts, their row of beacons to announce the approach of the hostile hill-men on the war-trail against their homes. Then our antiquary would turn to the work itself, and would point out the various parts, the mode of defence, the simple tactics of those primitive Vaubans. Or else he would show us the Roman detail of the later encampment; the square scar that marked the prætorian quarters; the regular succession of gates and defences. All this he would tell us from the bare inspection of the existing remains, reconstructing the lost history from his stored-up knowledge of like instances elsewhere. But I am wandering sadly from my London room and my little feather, this wintry afternoon. Let me look at it once more, and try to realize, in like manner, the story involved in its downy vans.

In the first place, this feather, as an anatomist would tell us, is a "dermal modification"—in other words, an altered bit of the skin. Every part of a plant or animal undergoes changes, our modern teachers say, just in accordance with the external influences which affect it. But the skin of an animal is naturally exposed to many more such surrounding agencies than its internal organs. Accordingly, we find that no structure exhibits such strange variations as the skin. Besides the regular modifications which we see in the scales or horny plates of fishes, the smooth coats or solid shells of reptiles, the feathers of birds, and the hair of mammals, numerous other minor peculiarities occur in almost every species. Such are the horns of cows and goats, the spike of the rhinoceros, the beaks, nails, claws, hoofs, and talons of beasts or birds, and the tail-plumes, ruffs, lappets, crests, and ornamental adjuncts of all the more æsthetic animals. In no class are these variations in the external covering more conspicuous than among the biped tribe whose spoils I am now holding in my hand as the text for our afternoon's discourse.

How birds first came to be winged and feathered we can hardly say as yet. To be sure, most of us have seen a picture, at least, of that strange oolitic monster, the pterodactyl, a saurian with a head like a crow, but having the fore-part protracted into long jaws, fitted with teeth not very dissimilar from those of a crocodile; while its legs were supplied, apparently, with a membrane, by whose aid the creature probably flew about in the same manner as a bat. These real flying dragons recall in many points the appearance of a bird, especially in the skull and the position of the eyes. Moreover, Professors Marsh and Huxley have shown that the earliest fossil birds resemble the pterodactyl and other reptiles in many important peculiarities of structure, far more than their modern representatives. Some of them even possess teeth set in their jaws after a reptilian fashion. Though the evidence still remains very fragmentary, we may regard it as probable that birds are descended from some early reptilian form, more or less like the

pterodactyl, if not actually from that partially-winged saurian itself. But perhaps it is premature to build with any confidence upon such dubious ground; and we may consequently accept the earliest birds on their own responsibility, without inquiring too curiously into their antecedents, or compelling them to produce a genealogical table of their ancestry.

The essential characteristic of a bird consists in the fact that it is a flying animal; and feathers are the kind of skin-covering best adapted to its special manner of life. In their nature and mode of development, feathers closely agree with the hair of mammals; but the differences between them are all of a sort which fit the bird for its aerial existence. We see this fact very clearly if we look at the instance of those birds which do not fly. Running species, such as the ostriches, have downy plumes, in which many of the essential characters of the feather are greatly obscured. In the emu, whose habits are more strictly cursorial, the plumage almost resembles hair. In the cassowary, the likeness becomes yet more striking; while the wingless apteryx of New Zealand has not even the few bare quills which stand for wing-feathers in the former bird. So, too, among those sedentary marine birds, the penguins, where the wings have been converted into a sort of fins for diving, the feathers undergo a parallel change into scales. There is reason, indeed, to suspect, as Mr. Lowne has pointed out, that these marine species retain in many ways the primitive characters of the class; and we may perhaps regard them rather as birds in whom the pinions and plumage have never fully developed than as birds in whom they have assumed a new form.

On the other hand, the truest feathers—that is to say, those which exhibit the essential features of a feather in the most marked manner—are specially connected with the act of flight. The general surface of the body is covered with soft down, among which sprout the delicate plumes that form the common covering for warmth and protection; but only on the wings and tail do those long and stiff quills appear, which, after all, are the feathers *par excellence*, the models and prototypes of all the rest. Now it is quite obvious to everyone that the wings are the organs of flight, and that the quills are the part by means of which the powerful muscles of the bird are brought to bear upon the sustaining atmosphere. As for the tail, its functions resemble those of a rudder, in directing the course of flight to right or left. The difference between these true flying feathers and the mere clothing of the back and breast is so striking that naturalists have given them separate technical names, as *quills* and *plumes* respectively.

From such facts, and others like them, I think we may arrive at an important conclusion—that feathers have been developed and selected through the habit of flight. Probably our monstrous friend the pterodactyl had only a membranous wing or bit of skin, extending from the elongated outer finger of his fore-arm to the leg. Such a parachute we still see among the so-called flying squirrels and lemurs; while in the

bats it has developed into a sort of webbed wing. But if any of the early birds happened to possess an altered hair-like or scale-like covering—the relic, perhaps, of some common reptilio-mammalian ancestor—which afforded them any extra grip upon the air through which they fell rather than floated, then those individuals would thereby gain an extra chance of catching prey or escaping enemies, and therefore of survival in the constant rivalry of species with species. The more perfect these organs became, the more closely adapted to the function of flight, the greater the advantage the bird would derive from their possession, and therefore, the better the chance of survival which it would obtain. Thus, apparently, the most aerial birds have the largest and strongest quills, and the most quill-like plumes, while the running and diving birds have either never developed these adjuncts in their highest form, or else have lost them by disuse.

Let me take down one of the peacock's feathers, which stands on the mantelpiece in this Vallauris vase, and closely examine its structure. It consists of a long central shaft, horny and tubular at the lower end, and filled above with a soft, white, spongy matter; while a number of little barbed branches are given off on either side, curiously interlaced by means of tiny hooked filaments, whose myriad threads are far too numerous for the most industrious critic to count up. Everybody knows that this tubular structure combines in the highest degree the mechanical requisites of lightness and strength; and everybody has read that it is employed with the self-same object by human engineers, in such constructions as the great bridges which span the Menai Straits or the St. Lawrence at Montreal. Evidently this peacock's feather, though now converted to a purely ornamental function, was originally developed for the purpose of flight. If I doubt it for a moment, I need only look at the quill pen in my desk over yonder. That flat blade, close-textured and strongly woven, clearly belongs to a flying organ; and this beautiful mass of green and golden waving plumelets is evidently modelled on the self-same plan. It is useless, or next to useless, now, for flight; but it still bears clear traces of its original function in the structure and arrangement of its shaft and barbs.

Next, let me look at the little downy feather I have abstracted from the Indian cushion. This is not a flying organ, nor did its representative on any early ancestor ever fulfil a similar office. Light, warm, soft, fluffy, its whole object is decidedly that of clothing against chilly weather, and protection against thorns or other rough bodies. Yet when I examine it closely, I see that the same general ground-plan still runs through it, as that which ran through the goose-quill and the peacock's tail-covert. "How comes this?" I ask myself; "here we have a small, delicate, almost fleshy shaft, instead of the horny quill; and a feeble set of downy barbs instead of the strong, well-woven blade: yet the main features remain unaltered, though the function is entirely different. How can I account for this resemblance?"

The case of the emu and the apteryx help to throw light upon the problem thus disclosed. Where birds fly very little, their feathers never acquire or else soon lose the distinctive quill-like character; but where birds fly much, the quill-producing tendency becomes strong and pronounced. Primarily, this tendency ought to affect only those parts which are used in flight, namely, the wings and tail; and, as a matter of fact, we have seen that these are the parts which exhibit it in the highest degree. It would be almost impossible, however, that a change of such magnitude should be set up in some of the feathers, without to a lesser extent affecting all the rest. We might as well expect that the hair on a certain patch of some animal's skin would grow thick and spike-like, without any corresponding alteration in the rest of his body. True, natural selection does sometimes produce this result for some special purpose, when it is highly desirable that an acquired character should be confined to a small area. But, as a rule, when one part of the skin hardens, like that of a turtle or crocodile, the tendency to bony development shows itself in every part; and when certain hairs become converted into thick spines, like those of the hedgehog, the echidna, and the porcupine, a general bristly tone pervades almost all the coat. The scaly plates of the armadillo and the pangolin in like manner communicate a universal scaliness to the whole external surface of the animal. We may say in simple language that the body has *got into the habit* of producing certain structures, and that the habit extends to analogous parts in which it is not strictly necessary.

This is the case with the flying birds. Some of their feathers—modified scales or hairs—having become specially adapted for flying, all the rest follow suit to a greater or less extent. Indeed, we can hardly imagine how quills could come into existence at all, unless we allow that there must first have been an adventitious tendency towards the production of light-barbed shafts over the whole body. Those birds which exhibited this adventitious habit in the highest degree would become the ancestors of the aerial species, in whom it is still further developed by natural selection; while those birds which exhibited it in the least degree would become the ancestors of the diving, running, and scraping tribes, in whom natural selection favours rather such special adaptations as web-feet, fin-like wings, long and powerful legs, and ornamental plumage.*

* Of course no effect in nature is really *accidental*, that is to say, uncaused; but in organic nature, effects which arise from special collocations of causes, unconnected with the previous habits of a plant or animal, may fairly be called *adventitious*. If they result in some alteration beneficial to the species, the alteration will be further strengthened by natural selection, and its final outcome will be a *purposive* structure—that is to say, a structure specially adapted to its peculiar function. But it must be remembered that almost all purposive structures were in their origin adventitious. I say "almost all" and not "all," because an exception must be made in favour of what Mr. Herbert Spencer calls "functionally-produced structures."

The æsthetic philosopher, however (if the reader will permit me to designate myself by such a periphrasis), is far more interested in the modifications which feathers undergo, *after* they have become feathers, than in those which they undergo before reaching that stage of their development. For the infinite variety of colouring, the exquisite tones of metallic sheen, the graceful arrangement of crests, tufts, plumes, and lappets, which render birds such conspicuous objects in our museums or gardens, are all of them due to the pigments or shapes of feathers, and all of them have apparently been produced by the voluntary choice of beautiful mates amongst the birds themselves.

The modifications of feathers thus originated form, of course, a clue to the tastes of the various birds which possess them; because each species will naturally select such mates as best satisfy its ideas of the beautiful, and so will transmit the admired qualities to its descendants. It is a remarkable fact that the tastes of many birds, indirectly disclosed in such a manner, coincide very closely with the tastes of mankind at large.

Not all birds, however, exhibit equally these æsthetic preferences. Some large families, like those of the hawks, eagles, owls, and night-jars, are noticeable neither for beauty of colour nor for richness of song. Other classes, again, like those of our own English hedge-birds, seem rather musical than chromatically inclined in their tastes. As a rule, we may say that birds of prey and nocturnal birds are very deficient in æsthetic feeling, all their energies being apparently directed to swiftness of pursuit and skill in hunting; while, on the other hand, small seed-eating birds, and those which live on little insects or other minute animals, generally expend all their æsthetic sentiment on the faculty of song. But only those birds which live upon fruits, or the mixed nectar and insects extracted from flowers, usually possess brilliant colours.

I have already more than once pointed out to the readers of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE the probable reason for this peculiar connection.* The eyes of fruit-eating or flower-feeding animals become specially adapted to the stimulation of coloured light, and therefore the creatures become capable of receiving special pleasure from such sources. Accordingly, those among their fellows which displayed brilliant colours would prove most attractive, and would be chosen as mates for their beauty. I have instanced before, amongst the flower-feeding species, the numberless varieties of humming-birds, and the almost equal profusion of sun-birds, to which we may add a few other minor forms, such as the brush-tongued lorries; while amongst the fruit-eaters, the parrots, macaws, cockatoos, toucans, barbets, nutmeg-pigeons, fruit-pigeons, chatterers, and birds-of-paradise, may stand as cases in point. But it will be more interesting here to glance briefly at the various modes in which these

* See a paper on "The Origin of Flowers" in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE for May 1878; and another on "The Origin of Fruits," in August 1878.

colours are produced than to extend the list of species which display them.

The commonest method of exhibiting colour is by means of pigments either in the external coating of the feathers, or in their deeper layers. Cases of this sort are too frequent to need special exemplification; but some birds have brilliant hues otherwise displayed, as in the wattles of the common barn-door fowl, the fleshy appendages of the turkey, and the painted face of the carrier pigeon. The wattled honey-sucker of Australia has two drooping folds of flesh, which fall like bonnet-strings under his throat; the king-vulture has his head and neck covered with naked skin, of every hue in the rainbow; and the cassowary (by far the most frugivorous of all the ostrich tribe) has the same parts of a brilliant red, variegated with melting shades of blue. In many other birds the beak becomes an ornamental adjunct; and this tendency reaches its furthest development in the bill of the toucan, whose colours almost vie with the humming-bird itself. But the most curious of all such æsthetic modifications is that from which the wax-wings derive their name. In these birds, the shafts of certain wing-feathers are prolonged into small horny expansions, bright scarlet in hue, exactly resembling, both in colour and texture, little tags of red sealing-wax.

The metallic lustre of feathers is generally due to fine lines on the surface of the barbules, like those which produce the iridescence of mother-of-pearl. Such lustre occurs in the sun-birds and humming-birds, and on many other less ornamental species. Sometimes gleaming like gold or bronze, sometimes fading away into jetty black, anon reappearing as glancing outbursts of crimson, azure, or exquisite green, it has gained for the birds on which it appears such poetical names as ruby-throated, topaz-crested, amethystine, golden, emerald, and sapphire. Not only does it occur upon the burnished neck of the dove, but it gives a passing splendour to the sable livery of the crow, and throws a thousand changeful hues over the glossy plumage of the mallard.

But besides the ornamental effects of colour and lustre, feathers appeal to the æsthetic taste of birds by their form, their arrangement, and their variety. Only the plainest birds have all their plumage exactly uniform and simply disposed. In an immense number of species, certain feathers have been specially modified in shape so as to form crests, fan-like tails, lappets, and other ornaments. And just as a good architect lavishes his decorations chiefly on the constructive points of his building, the critical parts, such as arches, doorways, windows, and architraves, so do we find that birds have chosen to place *their* decorative modifications on the most important nodal points of their bodies, and that they generally lavish their richest colouring upon these ornamental adjuncts. This peacock's feather, for instance, formed part of a gorgeous semicircular fan, which composed, as it were, the background or *ereredos* of the whole living picture when expanded, and the train of the majestic sultan when folded in repose. A plume from the neck or back,

though still beautiful with golden green and faintly purplish blue, would not have exhibited those splendid eye-like spots which reflect the sunlight in a mingled mass of glory from this perfect tail-covert. Only in the most fitting positions for decoration do birds, as a rule, expend their choicest designs.*

The feathers of the ostrich naturally occur first to the human investigator of æsthetic taste in birds. The quills of the wing and tail, here purely ornamental in their function, compose the well-known silky plumes of commerce. The common crane has also beautiful elongated wing-feathers, which fall on either side of the tail in graceful waving masses. If we may trust the doubtful pictures which have come down to us, that grotesque and gigantic pigeon, the dodo, possessed similar tufts of ornamental plumage. But the great order of gallinaceous birds, or the hen and turkey tribe, display the most magnificent tails of all, so familiarly known in the peacock and the pheasant family, as well as in the humbler denizens of our English farmyards.

Crests form another favourite ornamental device among birds, occurring independently in the most different orders. The graceful tuft of the grey heron must have attracted the attention of every observer. Among the pheasants, similar decorative adjuncts are common; and the curassow shows this peculiarity in a very beautiful form. With parrots and cockatoos, crests are of frequent occurrence; and they make equally striking features among the humming-birds and sun-birds. Indeed, it may be roughly asserted that those birds which seek their food among flowers and fruits, and which consequently exhibit a taste for bright colours, are also the species in which ornamental tufts of feathers most frequently occur. But crests are also found even among the generally sombre and inartistic birds of prey, being by no means unusual in the owls and hawks; while the serpent-eating secretary-bird derives his queer name from the fancied resemblance of his top-knot to a pen stuck behind the ear. Other well-known instances of crested species are the hoopoe, the waxwing, the golden-crested wren, and many jays. But the umbrella-bird, a Brazilian fruit-crow, exhibits the fullest development of this particular ornament, having the whole head covered by a dome of slender shining blue feathers, about five inches in length by four and a-half in breadth. It may be added that almost all birds which possess these ornaments possess also the power of raising or depressing them at will; and that during the season of courtship, the male birds constantly expand all their charms before the eyes of their admiring mates. We have all seen this ostentatious display ourselves in the case of the peacock, the turkey, and the barn-door fowl. It proves almost beyond

* I say "as a rule," because the hornbills, toucans, vultures, certain pigeons, and a few other species, offend against our ordinary human canons of taste; but the ornaments of birds seldom or never render them ridiculous in our eyes, like those of many highly-decorated monkeys.

a doubt the æsthetic purpose and function of such otherwise useless, inconvenient, and vitally expensive excrescences.

Sometimes the crest is produced by some other means than that of a mass of plumes. Besides the well-known fleshy comb of our friend chanticleer, there is the horny helmet of our old acquaintance the cassowary, and the quaint protuberances on the beak of the jacana. Most eccentric of all is the device adopted by the hornbills, whose name sufficiently indicates their peculiarity in this respect. The beak in these birds is prolonged above into a single unicorn-like process, extravagantly disproportioned to the general size of its wearer.

On the other hand, it may be noted that most small singing-birds, or other species which live on seeds, grains, insects, and mixed small food, are destitute of tufted ornaments, as well as of brilliant colouring.

The lappets, frills, or other neck-pieces of so many decorated species must not pass entirely unnoticed in this review of æsthetic devices among birds. Beginning with the mere burnished breast-plumage of the pigeon, or the crimson stomacher of the robin, they become at last, in the humming-birds, sun-birds, and other tropical species, the most exquisite drapery of amethyst, topaz, emerald, or golden bronze. The so-called beard of the turkey is a special example of a very aberrant type. The ruff derives his English name from a similar peculiarity.

The birds-of-paradise unite all these modes of ornamentation in the highest degree, and with the most harmonious results. They join the graceful plumes of the ostrich to the dainty colouring of the sun-bird. Crests almost as largely developed as that of the umbrella-bird overshadow their beautiful heads; frills as full as those of the humming-birds fall down in metallic splendour before their gorgeous necks. And if any proof be wanting of the connection between the nature of the food and the general beauty of the plumage, it may be found in the fact that these royally-attired creatures are first cousins of our own dingy crows and jackdaws; but while the crow seeks his livelihood among the insects and carrion of an English ploughed field, the bird-of-paradise regales his lordly palate on the crimson and purple fruits which gleam out amid the embowering foliage of Malayan forests.

Equally magnificent are the members of the genus *Epimachus*, inhabitants of the same brilliant archipelago. Their long silky plumes float behind them in the same graceful curves; their burnished necks are adorned with the same glancing hues of ruby and emerald. Yet they are surpassed in one respect by their distant relatives, the lyre-birds, first cousins of our diminutive English wrens. Though destitute of brilliant colouring and metallic sheen, these curious birds exhibit in their long and beautiful tails the only undoubted example among the lower animals of a love for symmetrical patterns.

I have only bethought me now of a few among the countless modifications which feathers undergo, for the æsthetic gratification of their wearers, or rather of their wearers' mates, and the list might be almost

indefinitely prolonged. But it will be better worth while, perhaps, to glance briefly at another set of facts connected with feathers—I mean their artificial employment by human beings for the exactly identical purpose of æsthetic decoration. Could any fact show more clearly the similarity of artistic feeling which runs through the whole animal series than this thought, that man makes use, for his own adornment, of the very self-same beautiful coloured baubles which the birds originally developed to charm the eyes of their fastidious brides?

I need not recall by name the various kinds of plumage so employed—the feathers of the ostrich, the marabou, the bird-of-paradise, the emu, the pheasant, and the gull; the sun-birds and the humming-birds mercilessly slaughtered by the million in the Malay Archipelago, Ceylon, and Trinidad to supply the bonnets of London and Paris; the swan's down, the grebe, the widow-birds, the cockatoos, the parrots, the macaws, which decorate our wives and children with barbaric spoils. It will suffice to remember, in passing, that from the feather-mantles of Hawaiian kings, the feather-kirtles of American Indians, and the feather mosaics of Mexico, to the plumes of our own court-dress, our own military uniforms, and our own quaintly-surviving funeral processions, these same "dermal modifications" of birds have served an æsthetic purpose, better or worse, throughout the whole course of human history.

Nor does the resemblance stop here. Mankind employs tufts of feathers for decorative display in just the same manner as the birds who originally developed them. The Red Indian in his war-paint dressed out his head with a row of quills, arranged in exactly the same order as the top-knot of a hoopoe or a cockatoo. The feather collars of so many savage tribes recall to the letter the frills and lappets of the humming-bird or the epimachus. The ostrich-plumes of our English royal receptions, and the *panache* of our European officers' dress, are adaptations from the primitive idea of the crane and the umbrella-bird. Every where, the tuft of feathers is placed on some prominent part of the person—some "constructive point" in the human or avian system of architecture.

A ring at the bell warns me that a visitor is standing at the door. I throw my little feather hastily into the fire, and cut short my reflections to welcome my expected guest. But one last thought occurs to me before I close my afternoon's meditation. To be "pleased with a feather" appeared to the great metaphysical poet of the eighteenth century a mark of childish simplicity. Perhaps it may be so; but, after all, is there not some solace in that new philosophy which can enable one to pass a whole hour, this murky afternoon, in pleasurable contemplation of that tiny plume which seems no contemptible subject of human study to Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer?

Village Life in the Apennines.

No feature in the Italian landscape is more strikingly suggestive to the Northern traveller than the aspect of the lesser towns and villages scattered through the mountain districts. In other countries the rural dwellings are to be seen nestling in lowly comfort in the hollows, or straggling in careless security over the plain; and the thatched roofs and village spire generally mark the course of some highway, whose facilities for communication have determined their site. Even in Switzerland, the land of mountaineers *par excellence*, the population follows the same law of density as the atmosphere, and is mainly crowded into the narrow, reeking valleys, where towns and hamlets seem as though crouching at the mountain foot, and man is almost thrust out of sight by the portentous magnitude of the features of nature. Villages with an altitude of three or five thousand feet above the sea are there relatively low-lying as compared with the mountain masses towering above them, and the inhabitants show the effects of restricted sunlight and impeded circulation of air in the most repulsive forms of physical degeneracy. But change the Alpine for the Apennine districts, and the practice of the people in choosing sites for their habitations is exactly reversed. There, for one village built on the valley bottom you will see ten looking proudly down on it from heights varying from one to two thousand feet above it; for one through which your carriage passes on the broad highway you will leave twenty or thirty to right or left, on pinnacles superbly scornful of such modern innovations as wheeled vehicles, and accessible only to the stout pedestrian, or sure-footed mountain ass. For before roads were, they sat enthroned, these discrowned queens of the Apennine—eyries of the Roman eagles—robbers' nests of the rapacious Lombard chiefs—each from her sun-bleached crag ruling her miniature kingdom with as stern a sway, and casting her infinitesimal weight into the balance of warring powers with as high a courage, as the great cities of the plains; from them, too, catching the contagious fury, together with the world-famed watchwords of Italian civil strife, till the challenges of Guelph and Ghibelline—the names of Cæsar and Pope—made these gorges ring to wars without a history, and battles without a name.

In the archiepiscopal archives of Lucca is a document of the tenth century enumerating a large proportion of the mountain villages in that district by the names they still bear; thus establishing their existence for a trifle of nine hundred years, and leaving the imagination free to carry it still farther back into the past. Roman origin is ascribed to many

and, in the Apennine of Pistoia especially, the names seem sufficiently obvious derivatives from the Latin originals—as Rio Flaminio, Vellano, from *Forum Avellanum*; Piteglio, Pupiglio, and Gavinana, from the *Petilian*, *Popilian*, and *Gabinian* families. Most of the churches date from the ninth or tenth century, and are in many cases interesting specimens of old Lombard architecture, attributed to wandering brothers of the builder monks of Como. With such a claim to respectability as is given by an antiquity of eight or nine centuries, these little communities may not be considered unworthy of a closer inspection, that we may see how their inhabitants, living amid surroundings little, if at all, changed since the Middle Ages, are affected by the altered conditions of the rest of the world. Following, then, the great highway, which, after leaving the rich plain of Lucca, penetrates, by the valleys of the Serchio and Lima, into the heart of the Apennines, we find ourselves in a country widely different in culture and aspect from the lowlands of Italy, yet equally unlike any mountain district we are acquainted with elsewhere. For the first few miles the road passes some scattered villages, or houses of entertainment of the poorest class, but after a while it enters a sylvan solitude, where the chestnut takes the place of all other cultivation, and human habitations disappear from the scene. No lordly villas among the trees bespeak the presence of landed gentry or resident proprietors, for here the peasant is lord of the soil, and to seek his dwelling we must take to rougher paths and more primitive modes of travel. The road meantime runs like the avenue of a nobleman's park through forest slopes unfenced on either hand, where no indications of rural industry tell that the beautiful trees were planted for other than ornamental purposes. For two thousand feet above the valley they clothe all the lower spurs, the jutting forelands that push the river into serpentine curves, with a velvet robe, whose rich green folds follow the rugged anatomy of the rocks beneath, and mark their contours as drapery does the limbs of a statue. Above the forest zone, the higher summits abruptly thrust their gaunt nudity into the upper blue, the savage sculpture of their stony ribs accentuated by amethyst shadow, and starting out in strange contrast from the soft mantle of verdure that clothes their lower extremities.

Midway between their Alpine regions and the valley level dwells the great bulk of the population, not in rural solitude among their woods and vineyards, but congregated in the villages of which the road affords but occasional glimpses. Seen thus from below they add a singular charm to the scenery as they come into view—here overhanging a wooded gorge from a dizzy precipice of crag, there crowning a rocky pinnacle with a cornice of gleaming walls and bristling roofs and towers—or, again, balanced like a rope-dancer on a ridge so narrow as to fall sheer away for hundreds of feet from the foundations of the houses on either side the street. From a strategic point of view their positions are well chosen, for they almost invariably command the approaches from all sides, and, held by a stout garrison, would be impregnable against all

attacks save those of artillery or famine. They tempt us irresistibly to a nearer approach, and if we do not fear a steep climb up mountain paths that are none of the smoothest, we shall find ourselves amply rewarded.

Every foot of ascent in this enchanted atmosphere lends new magic to the scene, not alone from added breadth of horizon, but from the greater depth of liquid medium which transfigures everything looked at from above. The long swathes of chestnut-covered ridges seem to undulate, too, in more sinuous curves as we rise; the wooded gorges to gulf themselves below in more aerial depths of distance; the nearer summits to rear overhead in more ridgy bulk of sun-gilt granite; while across the visionary blue of the Garfagnana the phantom Alps of Carrara—too fair and pale for peaks of common earthly rock, too keenly carved for unsubstantial cloud—soar into the ether like ghosts of mountains of an elder world. Still up and up, through miles of hanging forest, while our goal is far above us, now seen through an opening in the trees, now hidden by the winding of the path. Surely that glorious mural crown, circling the mountain's brow as closely as if carved in the living rock, is not a mere mountain hamlet, the abode of a few poor shepherds and herdsmen, but rather some enchanted city, whose inhabitants, banished or spell-bound, are but waiting the fated hour to reanimate its silent streets with the bustle or pageantry of life!

Meantime, as we draw nearer to it, we can observe its structure more closely, and see that its walls form either a complete circle or an arc whose chord is supplied by a sheer face of crag precipice, so that we must necessarily skirt the enclosure until we meet a gate. This mural *enceinte* has its upper portion pierced with windows, and is not a separate structure, but consists of the external wall of a continuous row of houses, united thus in self-defence, like a band of men who stand in a ring with arms linked, facing outwards, to meet an attack. The gates are generally two in number, but sometimes more, according to the nature of the position and the manner in which it commands the approaches from different sides. It is a singular circumstance that the cases in which more recent buildings have been added without the mural ring are extremely rare, showing that there has been no growth in the little community since its earliest foundation. The exigencies of the nature of the ground have always determined the plan of these villages, as they belong to that primitive order of architecture which conforms to circumstances, but does not dream of modifying them. Thus, some consist of a long narrow street, occupying the summit of a sharp crest, with a precipitous fall on either side, while others circle a conical hilltop with tiers of sepia-tinted roofs, or cling to the rocky ledges in acrobatic defiance of gravitation. Such is their external aspect; now let us look within. Passing under the dark archway of the nearest gate we climb the street, which is steep and narrow, after the fashion of a rude stone staircase; while the women, plying distaff and spindle in their doorways, raise their

heads as we pass, and the children follow, half curious, half shy. In the villages of the Tuscan Apennines the stranger will scarcely ever be asked for money, and will sometimes even find it refused if offered for any trifling service. On weekdays the men are all absent, but on the Sunday or holiday afternoons may be seen seated on walls and doorsteps, or lounging in their shirt-sleeves about the little piazza. The houses are solidly built of stone, dark with the grime of centuries, and only the better ones have adopted the innovation of glazed windows; wooden shutters in most cases supplying the sole protection against the elements. The interior is generally cleaner and more comfortable than the exterior would suggest, and there is at least the luxury of ample space. After the fatigue of the ascent we shall probably not be too fastidious to rest on a wooden bench at the little café, and refresh ourselves with a draught of the sour vintage of the mountains before undertaking a further climb; for, through a tangle of clematis and brambles we must reach the old feudal tower, the original *raison d'être* of the little community, now scarce even furnishing a memory among the poor dwellings that have survived it.

It stands, however, in proud pre-eminence in its decay, looking down on the group of lowly roofs that huddled themselves at its feet to seek protection even with tyranny, and commanding a panorama such as the world can scarcely match, but whose loveliness had little part in determining its site. There was not much thought, indeed, of æsthetic selection in those stirring times, when every hamlet was at war with its neighbour, and every hillside the seat of a separate dynasty of predatory chiefs. It seems a strange fatality that, while humbler families are known to have existed here on the same spot for countless generations, not one of the great feudal lords who ruled valley and mountain from these airy strongholds has left descendants of his name or line. The Soffredinghi, Corvaresi, and Lupari, with all the other petty tyrants of these Apennine gorges, have perished root and branch: their dungeons are stables for the mountain cattle; their roofless fastnesses a refuge for stray sheep and goats; the descendants of their serfs and menials own the soil that once was theirs; the proud vavasours* have passed away, and the lowly have inherited the land.

With the extinction of the great families, the authentic records of the past have disappeared, and the vaguest and most contradictory traditions are all that survive among the inhabitants in the shape of history. As to chronology, they are utterly hopeless, for "*ai tempi dei nostri antichi*," their almost invariable formula for any date beyond the memory of living witnesses, may mean equally seventy years ago, or seven hundred. An inquiry of mine as to the origin of one of the most venerable and remote of these villages gave rise to a lively controversy between two

* The *vavasori* were the lowest order of Lombard castellans who generally held these mountains. Above them were the *cattani*, and then came the higher nobility.

native authorities as to whether Napoleon I. or the Goths should be credited with the honour of its foundation. This lonely little settlement, which stands two thousand feet above the valley, miles from any high-road, in a singularly picturesque solitude, bars the foot of a high mountain pass leading into the Modenese country; and the inhabitants have strange legends about ancient incursions and raids of the Lombards. On one occasion, they relate, it was taken and occupied by the invaders, until the natives, returning in greater force, expelled them in their turn, drove them to take shelter in some hollows or caverns among the rocks at the other side of a ravine, and there massacred them to a man. From these grottoes strange cries and lamentations are to be heard on stormy nights, when the spirits are supposed to partake of the disturbance of the elements, and man or beast passing the spot after dark remains fixed there, mute and motionless, till sunrise; even asses, by this beneficent spell, being rendered incapable of braying!

On the way to this village (Montefegatesi) is a touching memorial of the love of these mountaineers for their native crags. It is a rude wooden cross among the chestnut woods, recording the name of Antonio Paci, and his death on this spot in 1864. He was an emigrant who, having made a little money in America, was on his way back to his country, when he was smitten with mortal disease. No persuasions could induce him to suspend his journey, and with his daughter by his side, and his effects loaded on an ass, he struggled up the long and difficult ascent, till, when a few steps more would have brought him within sight of his much-desired goal, his powers failed him and he died by the way. His fellow villagers paid a graceful tribute to his memory by marking the solitary place of his death with the simple inscription which meets their eyes as they pass to and fro. The legend of the building of the Ponte alla Maddalena, though it resembles a number of others current elsewhere, has some features which, perhaps, point to the common origin of all. This very singular bridge, probably built by the Countess Matilda, crosses the Serchio about twelve miles above Lucca, and the exaggerated height of one of its arches requires a pitch as steep as that of an ordinary house-roof in the narrow footway it carries over. The story believed by the peasants is that San Giuliano purchased the assistance of the Evil One in its construction, by a promise of the soul of its first passenger, and then cheated him by luring a dog to cross it, rolling a cake over before him. The arch-fiend was so infuriated at this shabby fraud that he hurled the animal through the masonry into the river below, leaving a hole, which is still visible. The only strange thing about this legend is that its jumble of a soul ransomed by a dog from the evil spirit in crossing a bridge seems like a distorted reminiscence of the Parsi belief about the souls of the dead, Christianised by the introduction of a saint. According to the Zend-Avesta certain dogs have the power of protecting the departed spirit from the demons lying in wait for it on its perilous passage of the narrow bridge over the abyss of hell,

and a dog is always led in funeral processions, and made to look at the corpse. Doubtless all the mediæval legends of the Evil One had an Oriental origin, and are associated with the Persian belief.

The most definite historical tradition subsisting among these mountains is generally that of an animated civil war between each village and its nearest neighbour ; and the inhabitants still narrate with glee how Lugliano and La Rocca, or Benabbio and San Mamerzio, bombarded each other habitually across the narrow valley dividing their respective mountains. A circumstance which occurred within the last few years shows how much of the old spirit of local jealousy survives, even among the altered conditions of modern life. A woman, a native of Granaiole, which is perched among the hills, some twelve hundred feet above the level of the Lima, had "married beneath her," literally if not metaphorically, as she had taken for her husband an inhabitant of the plain. On her death she desired to be buried with his family, and those about her prepared to give effect to her last wishes ; but her townspeople, mustering by night, and descending in force from the mountain, carried off the body, which they bore back with them in triumph, and had interred in their own burial-ground. In the Middle Ages the incident would probably have led to a protracted civil war, which would have drawn in all the neighbouring communities, and desolated the whole mountain-side. The population of the Tuscan Apennine is, notwithstanding this instance of local pugnacity, among the most peaceable and orderly in the world ; crime scarcely exists amongst them, while the means for its repression are scanty in the extreme. Two or three municipal guards in some of the principal towns, with a force of carabinieri, or mounted police, in the capital of the district, comprise the whole machinery of justice from Lucca to Pistoia, and even their office seems pretty much of a sinecure.

The mountaineers want little from the world without, for their soil produces all the necessities of life, and almost every farmer's wife has her loom for weaving homespun cloth and stout hempen linen. They are, however, glad to bring down their farm-produce, such as butter and eggs, fowls, orchard fruit, and Alpine strawberries, to the markets in the valley, when the strangers in *villeggiatura* during the bathing season furnish a demand for them. Among other mountain products, the chestnut-fed bacon deserves a world-wide reputation, as the best Spanish and Westphalian hams do not surpass it in delicacy and flavour. The yearly fairs of St. John and St. Mary Magdalen (June 24 and July 22) are the great rural gatherings, to which the most remote villages send a contingent, bringing down their wares for sale, and taking back such foreign articles of luxury as home production does not supply. The merchandise interchanged on both sides is of the simplest description, though the noise made over it might lead the stranger to imagine that the wealth of the Indies was changing hands. From dawn of day the little market-place resounds with vociferations, and a confused din rises

far up into the silent hills, while ropes of onions, hanks of homespun yarn, figs, and tomatoes, on one side, compete with straw hats, earthenware pipkins, bellows with long tin nozzles for sulphuring the vines, coloured handkerchiefs, threads, tapes, and cheap trinkets, on the other. A man, with a basket before him, containing a number of small packets of uniform size and shape, tempts the rustics with all his eloquence to try their chance in this lottery, at a *soldo* each. "*Alla pesca e alla fortuna*," he shouts, "*un soldo l'una! un soldo l'una!*" A handsome young mountaineer, with a falcon's wing in his felt hat, shyly tries his fortune, and on opening his packet, unfolds, to the admiration of the bystanders, a gay-coloured neckerchief; another, encouraged by his example, extracts a pinchbeck ring, which the pedlar shily tells him will fit the dark-eyed girl standing by with a crimson pomegranate blossom coquettishly stuck behind her ear. A crowd gathers, and the mysterious packets quickly disappear, while the pedlar's wallet grows heavy with *soldi*.

Meantime the strains of a fiddle and flageolet from a neighbouring booth announce that the *burattini* are about to begin their performance; and the piazza is almost deserted as the peasants crowd in to see the puppets go through an heroic drama or screaming farce, in the same irresistibly ludicrous series of jerks. We, who have seen the isolated solitudes from which the audience has been gathered together, can understand that they are not very *blasé* as to their amusements, but will go back to their crag-built homes from such a scene of excitement with food for thought and conversation for the next twelve months.

Each little village becomes for one day in the year a centre of attraction to its neighbours, when it celebrates the feast of the titular saint of its parish with all due pomp and solemnity. Then the little piazza is gay with a crowd, all in their holiday best, and the quaint old church cannot contain the congregation, which overflows on the steps and terrace outside. The open-air processions are picturesque and impressive, consisting sometimes of hundreds of people bearing lighted tapers, the pious confraternities in their respective habits, the women wearing white veils of lace or embroidered muslin, while painted silk banners are borne at the head of each section. At intervals along the narrow way are temporary altars, garlanded with leaves and flowers, festooned with rich drapery, and blazing with lights; at each of these there is a pause, while some prayers are said, before the procession resumes its slow march and takes up again its monotonous but solemn chant. The inhabitants take great interest in these local feasts, which are a source of harmless rivalry between different districts. The Eve of St. John is celebrated, as it is in Ireland and many other countries, by great bonfires kindled on the hilltops, but there seems to be no tradition of the origin of the custom.

Local pilgrimages are another form of piety much in favour in these mountain districts, and as the shrines visited are generally situated in spots of singular beauty, the lovers of the picturesque would find attend-

ance on them anything but a penance. One of these, to the Hermitage of Gallicano, takes place on the Sundays of May and September, and attracts a considerable concourse from the neighbouring mountains. Gallicano itself is not in the Apennines, but facing them, in the Garfagnana valley, at the foot of the Apuan Alps, or mountains of Carrara. Its weather-stained houses, with *loggias* of open arches, occupy both sides of a narrow chasm, whose vertical walls are draped to the bottom by creepers in a trailing curtain of verdure. The gorge is spanned above the town by an aqueduct, carried across on a single Gothic arch, very sharp pointed, and with circular openings in the spandrels. The Hermitage is three miles farther up among the mountains, occupying a small natural platform above a wooded glen, and surrounded by reddish cliffs of considerable height, against which the church and campanile are built, so as to get one of their walls supplied by the mountain itself. In this romantic solitude, the pilgrims from the more distant parishes begin to arrive on the eve of the feast, when the men are accommodated in the *foresteria*, and the women locked in the church for the night. From less remote districts they start at break of day, or even earlier, so as to be in time for the morning services, after which the bell rings in a recognised series of signals, summoning the contingent of each parish to assemble and march off. Before noon the last have started, and the Hermitage is left silent and solitary once more. The actual church, dedicated to Maria Porta Coeli, dates only from 1671; but there was a much older one, now partially incorporated in the present structure, and the hermit whose devotion originally consecrated the spot lived in the tenth century. The Alp of San Pellegrino, in the Apennine of Modena, is also the goal of a pilgrimage during the Sundays of the month of May, and attracts a still larger number of the devout from the neighbouring mountains.

All these gatherings, whether for practical or pious purposes, take place during the summer months, as, during the winter, life in the Apennines may be said to come to a standstill. The mountain paths become almost impassable, the snow lies thick on the higher levels, putting a stop to all agricultural operations, and the lonely villages, cut off from communication with the world without, hibernate in deserted solitude during the long, bleak months. Old men, women, and children are all that are left by the hearth, for the able-bodied male population has gone elsewhere in search of work. The women have so little of the spirit of travel that it is no uncommon thing to meet one who has never visited the nearest village to her own, though she has been looking at it at long rifle range across the valley all her life; but the men are great wanderers, and are to be found in the most distant corners of the earth. There is a large emigration from these districts to America, whence many return at the end of twenty or five-and-twenty years, with enough money saved to buy a house and farm in their native parish; and the stranger will often be surprised to hear himself addressed in English in some remote

hamlet where he least expects to find a travelled native. Here are also mainly recruited the ranks of those vagrant image-sellers who wander over the Continent seeking a market for their plaster wares in all the great capitals, while a large proportion of the domestic servants employed by foreign families in the Italian cities have found their way from these mountains to the banks of Tiber or Arno. But the great annual migration is to the Maremma, and takes place in the end of September or beginning of October, as soon as the labour of the fields is finished, and the grain sown among the hills. Some of the emigrants work as masons, others rent the shooting of a tract of waste or woodland, furnishing the city markets with those hecatombs of small birds annually consumed there. Many go still farther afield for winter quarters, to Corsica, Calabria, and even the coasts of Africa; wherever railways or other works are in progress, and labourers in demand. In June or July these birds of passage return to reap their own harvests, in bands that fill half-a-dozen of the country carts; in which, as full of spirits as a party of schoolboys going home for the holidays, they rattle through the villages on the plain, singing in chorus to the accompaniment of the bells on the horses' collars.

Down to the Maremma, too, as in the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who has so well described their migration, go the great herds of sheep, horses, and cattle which have been pasturing all the summer on the velvety turf of the Apennine slopes, but are driven down to the plains by the approach of the autumn rains in September or October. In flocks of hundreds together go the sheep, blocking the roads with a moving, fleecy mass, and filling the narrow valley with the noise of their multitudinous bleating and jangling bells. Two or three dogs generally direct their movements, while the shepherds bring up the rear, their whole visible luggage consisting in most cases of a large slate-coloured cotton umbrella. In addition to this slender personal baggage, one of them often carries on his shoulders a tiny new-born lamb, which has chosen this inopportune moment for coming into the world. The sheep, unless they have encountered bad weather before leaving the upper pastures, come down in splendid condition, and the mountain mutton of Pistoia does credit to its feeding ground, by tenderness and flavour which leave the epicure nothing to desire. If, however, the autumn rains, with their relentless sleety cataracts, have caught the flock in the mountains, they present a most woe-begone aspect on their journey, and seem to lose all the benefit of their summer change. The pasture zone is above the level of the vines and chestnuts, and below that of the highest peaks, where vegetation ceases; that is to say, from fifteen hundred to three thousand feet above the valley.

Though the great forest belt seems to the eye to cover every palm's breadth of the lower slopes, it is in reality interrupted in parts by spaces of cornland, by vineyards, and even in some favoured spots by olive woods. The soil is then artificially banked up in terraced ledges, so as to

afford level strips for these forms of produce. The plough is unknown in this region, as the inequalities of the ground forbid its use, and the fields are dug entirely with the spade. The ridges newly dressed in the autumn look like the beds of a garden: not a stone is visible, and the rich, dark loam seems to have received the most careful manipulation. It must be amazingly productive, for I have seen a field in the Val di Lima, off which the wheat was reaped in the end of June, sown immediately with a fresh crop of beans and Indian corn to ripen before winter. The soil was barely turned with the spade, without being manured, yet in ten days the strong, silky blades of the young maize had shot up to half-a-foot above ground; and I felt disposed to credit the American saying as to the fertility of the soil of the Western States, in which you may plant tenpenny nails over night, and find them grown into twelve-inch spikes in the morning.

The Indian corn (grown only in the valley) is gathered in October, and many of the farmhouses then wear a golden mask, as the maize ears, looped together and hung to ripen more thoroughly in the sun, form a complete screen to the house front, pierced only by openings for the doors and windows. The culture of hemp furnishes the women with occupation throughout the year, and in the autumn may be heard from every village the chopping sound of the machine with which they scutch it in front of their doors, whisking the long bundles to and fro with a dexterity acquired by years of practice. It is then combed and carded until it becomes as fine as floss silk, and in the winter is first spun into yarn on the distaff, and then woven into linen in the loom which forms part of the furniture of every farmhouse.

The grape thrives to a considerable height (800 or 1,000 feet) above the valley, but the vintage is very variable, as it is much affected by cold or damp in the early summer. That of 1875 yielded a supply of wine for eighteen months, leaving a most opportune surplus to cover the deficiency of the following year, whose produce was scarce an eighth of that of its predecessor. The masses of grapes that load the vines in an abundant season are a marvel to Northern eyes. The whole country is garlanded and festooned as if for a triumph of Bacchus, and one no longer wonders that the Tuscan's favourite oath should be by the divinity who treats him so handsomely. In very productive seasons, however, the quality of the wine is generally below the average, as the grapes do not ripen simultaneously, and the peasants are impatient to gather them prematurely for fear of thieves. Indeed, the wine is always poor, though the grapes are large and well flavoured, and the system practised in Tuscany, called *il governo del vino*, which consists in adding a portion of the grapes, reserved for that purpose, after the first fermentation has set in, does not recommend itself by its results. The American vine, as it is called, has been introduced among the mountains, and produces a wonderful fruit, like a grape filled with the quintessence of strawberries or pineapples. The epicure who has not tasted *uva fragola* has still a

new sensation in store for his palate. The wine made from them does not keep at all, so they are only grown for the fruit market.

From the mountain slopes the eye is sometimes caught by a belt of white poplars, fringing the bed of a stream, and conspicuous amid the luxuriant verdure of the valley by their silvery bark and foliage. From their close pithy fibre is made the finest quality of paper turned out by Cini's great factory at San Marcello, the capital of the Apennine of Pistoia; and carts laden with the trunks, sawn into equal lengths, are often to be met on their way up the Val di Lima. The Lima itself is studded with a series of ruder mills for making the roughest sort of brown paper, from maize straw—a manufacture which has existed in this valley from the sixteenth century, and is the only one carried on there.

Farms let on the *mezzeria* system are to be found in the lower ground, even up to the foot of the hills; but slope and mountain, with their mantle of fruitful forest, are the peasant's sole property, where he is absolute lord of the soil he tills. Nor can he be reproached here with unthrifty husbandry, for on the southern declivities the ground has been laboriously and painfully terraced up to render possible the cultivation of vines and olives; and if the chestnut, which requires little tendance, has usurped the rest of the soil, it may be said in its defence, that it is Nature's save-all, and grows where no other plant would find footing. Short of the absolutely vertical, no steep seems too abrupt for it to clothe, no hanging ravine too rugged, no rocky shelf too narrow, for it to grow and prosper there. As hardy as the mountain pine, as fruitful as the sun-pampered olive, it braves the bleakest gales of the wind-swept Apennine; and where the scanty earth seems to grudge a sustenance to man, it bears aloft a harvest on its branches. The most long-suffering of trees, it will, if cut down, send forth anew fruitful suckers, and will still bring forth its prickly clusters when its stem is all scooped away by age and nothing but a shell of bark remains to carry the sap up to its crown.

The chestnut harvest, which takes place in October, is the great event of the year in the Apennines, and furnishes a recreation, rather than a task, to all classes of the population. The schools have their annual vacation in that month, that the children may assist in it; and it is difficult to find hands for any extra household work while a pleasant gipsy life goes on under the trees. The steep woods are then alive with merry parties picking the mahogany-brown nuts from among the fallen leaves and dropping them into long canvas pouches slung at the waist for the purpose. The boughs are never shaken to detach them, and the burrs fall singly as they ripen, rustling through the leaves, and breaking the forest silence with a heavy thud, as they strike the ground. They lie till picked up from day to day, during the appointed time for gathering them, which lasts a month, and is fixed by municipal proclamation—commonly from Michaelmas Day, September 29, to the feast

of Saints Simon and Jude, October 28th, but sometimes extended by special request, if the season be unusually late, for ten days longer. Any one wandering off the recognised paths through the woods during that period is liable to be shot by the proprietor, as in the Swiss vineyards in vintage time, but this sanguinary law seems to remain a dead letter. After the legal term has expired, the woods are free to the whole world, and are invaded by troops of beggars, gleanng any chance belated chestnuts, which, falling now, are the prize of the first comer. Those which drop at any time on a road passable for wheeled vehicles are also public property, and as the highway runs through chestnut woods the poor have a little harvest by the roadside.

The proprietors of woods too extensive for the gathering to be done by the members of their own household, engage a number of girls to assist, giving them food and lodging for forty days, and to each two sacks of chestnut flour on her departure. After their day's work in the woods they are expected to spin or weave in the evening for the benefit of the housewife, who thus gets her winter supply of yarn or linen pretty well advanced in this month. The poorer girls look forward to being employed in this way as a great treat, and will often throw up other occupations rather than lose it. In a fine season it is indeed sufficiently pleasant, for the lovely weather of a dry October among these Tuscan highlands makes open-air life unalloyed pleasure; but, on the other hand, one can hardly conjure up a more dismal picture than that presented by the dripping chestnut woods if the autumn rains have chosen that month for their own, when the sheeting floods of heaven thresh down the withered leaves as they fall, and the soaked burrs have to be fished out of the swirling yellow torrents that furrow the ground in all directions.

Wet or dry, however, October, unless the yield be exceptionally scanty, is a season of abundance and rejoicing through the country, while the peasants consume the fresh chestnuts by the sackful, not roasted, as they are eaten in the cities, but plainly boiled and eaten hot from the husk. The great mass are spread on the floors of the drying-houses—blind, deserted-looking buildings, scattered through the woods for this purpose, and which in the autumn seem to smoulder internally, as the smoke of the fire lit to extract the moisture from the fresh chestnuts escapes through all the interstices of the roof and walls. From the drying-house they are taken to the mill and ground into *farina dolce*, a fine meal, of pinkish colour and sickly sweet flavour, which forms the staple food of the population. From this they make *polenta* or porridge, in other districts made from Indian meal, and *necci*, round cakes baked between chestnut-leaves, which are kept and dried for the purpose, with the result of imparting a slightly pungent flavour of smoke that the stranger will hardly find an improvement. Other delicacies, too, are made from the chestnut flour, such as cakes covered with chocolate and sugar, but none are likely to commend themselves to Northern palates.

But to the simple taste of the mountaineer his homely fare seems sweeter than all rare foreign viands, as his native crag is dearer than the great capitals of the modern world. He asks nothing from civilisation, and renounces the present and the future to live alone with the past, which he clings to, without knowing it. For the force of association cannot count for much in a community whose history, as we have seen, is limited by the memory of the living. Yet the dweller in the Tuscan Apennine, and in the mountain regions throughout Italy, remains immovably fixed, of his own free choice, to the crag platform, whither his ancestors were driven for refuge by the exigencies of their time, and accepts the necessity of a thousand years ago as the unchangeable condition of to-day. The inhabitants of other countries have gradually abandoned the strong places originally built on by their forefathers, as increased security made self-defence unnecessary, and increased intercourse made accessibility desirable and profitable. Not so the Italian, in whom the tenacity of tradition and long-inherited usage is stronger than the love of convenience, of gain, or even of safety. The towns at the base of Vesuvius, buried beneath the devastating lava, rise from their ruins ere yet the fiery flood is cold above them; and while for Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabia there was in the Roman time no resurrection, Resina, Torre del Greco, and San Sebastiano are by the modern Italians rebuilt as often as destroyed. Luzzano in the Apennines, carried down the mountain-side by a landslip, which buried or swept into the Lima sixty-three houses and three churches, was re-erected on its former site, though not of its former size, by the inhabitants, as soon as they began to recover from the first stupefaction of the calamity. There is much to be said for the mountaineer's attachment to his lofty dwelling, and apart from the abstract question involved in weighing the pains against the penalties of progress, it is at least open to doubt whether he would not lose more than he would gain by descending to the valley, and whether the exhilarating breadth of light and air, the glorious amplitude of hanging panorama which reward his ascent, do not more than compensate for its fatigue. Modern fashion at least seems to say so, as it goes higher and higher in search of oxygen and scenery, and requires its summer haunts as many thousand feet above the level of the sea as is compatible with a due regard to creature comforts. The most enthusiastic advocate of mountain air might, however, shudder at the prospect before the Apennine villager, when the winter settles down on his home; when the chestnuts have been gathered and dried, the new wine made and tasted; when the younger men are gone to the metropolis or the Maremma, leaving the old, the helpless, and the feeble to await their return; and the snow, with gradual and noiseless footsteps, steals down from the higher peaks on the lonely village, wrapping it in a shroud of stillness and isolation. Perched then in aerial solitude on its unapproachable pinnacle, it looks down on the valley over a thousand feet of steep, bristling with leafless forest, while no sound reaches it save the

hoarse roar of the tawny torrents below, or the shrill whistle of the tramontana sweeping on it from some frigid zone of space. Then the water must be drawn across the snow, or up streets slippery with icy mud, and footing is difficult in the steep woods, where firewood, fortunately not scarce, must be gathered for the long, cold nights. But the winter, though sharp, is brief, and once Christmas has come and gone, spring is not far off; when the snow melts, the flowers break from the ground, the corn shoots fast, the chestnuts are green with promise, and summer is close at hand to bring life and animation once more to the highlands of the Apennines.

I shall not easily forget my last glimpse of one of these villages, and only wish I could make the reader see the picture of it impressed on my memory. It was early on an October morning, and a damp river fog had settled thickly on the valley, completely shutting out the mountains at either side. Overhead, however, the sky was clear, and suddenly, as the heavy swathes of mist floated aside, there gleamed out, like a rosy crown of morning glory, sole in that upper blue, a fairy city, with battlements and towers all flushed as they faced the newly risen sun. The Fata Morgana never reared for herself an air-built castle of more visionary aspect, yet it was but La Rocca, the dwelling of a few hundred poor mountaineers, that thus showed for a moment, isolated above the clouds, transfigured by the sunrise, and hung, like a glowing carcanet, on the very brow of heaven. For a moment only: the next, a fresh surge of the mist rose at it, swept past it, first blotted, then extinguished the vision, the dun vapours usurped its place in the sky, and the aerial city was seen no more.

E. M. CLERKE.

In Invitation to the Sledge.

COME forth, for dawn is breaking ;
 The sun hath touched the snow :
 Our blithe sledge-bells are calling,
 And Christian waits below.

All day o'er snow-drifts gliding
 'Twixt grey-green walls of ice,
 We'll chase the winter sunlight
 Adown the precipice.

Above black swirling death-waves
 We will not shrink nor blanch,
 Though the bridge that spans the torrent
 Be built by an avalanche.

We'll talk of love and friendship
 And hero-hearted men,
 Mid the stems of spangled larches
 In the fairy-frosted glen.

With flight as swift as swallows
 We'll sweep the curdled lake,
 Where the groans of prisoned kelpies
 Make the firm ice-pavement quake.

We'll thread the sombre forest
 Where giant pines are crowned
 With snow caps on their branches
 Bent to the snowy ground.

AN INVITATION TO THE SLEDGE.

Strong wine of exultation,
Free thoughts that laugh at death,
Shall warm our winged spirits,
Though the shrill air freeze our breath.

With many a waif of music
And memory-wafted song,
With the melody of faces
Loved when the world was young,

With dear Hellenic stories
And names of old romance,
We'll wake our souls' deep echoes
While the hills around us dance :

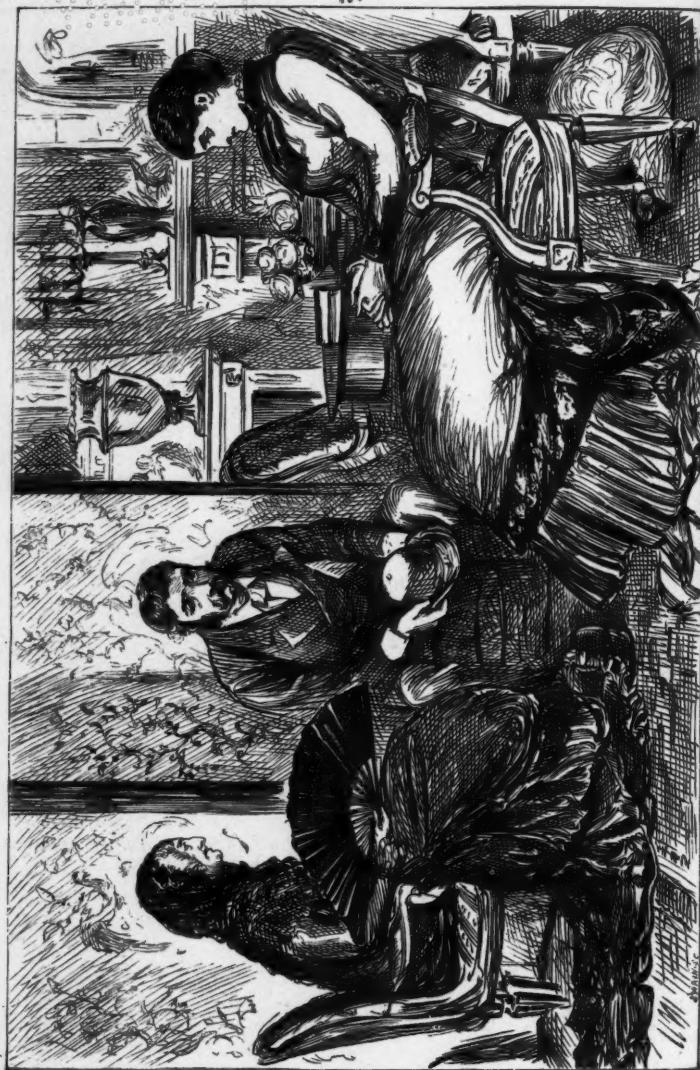
Dance to the arrowy motion
Of our sledge so firm and free,
Skimming the beaten snow-track
As a good ship skims the sea.

Like love, like all that's joyous,
Like youth, like life's delight,
This day is dawning o'er us
Between a night and a night.

O friend, 'tis ours to clasp it !
Come forth ! No better bliss
For hearts by hope uplifted
Hath heaven or earth than this !

J. A. SYMONDS.





HARRINGTON BORE IT ALL WITH COMPLAINT PATIENCE.

Mademoiselle de Mersac.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE v. PRUDENCE.



LEON'S non-appearance at breakfast did not give rise to any anxiety at the Campagne de Mersac. In that easy-going household no one was expected to give an account of him or herself before the dinner-hour; and, as for its master, if, as often happened, business or pleasure took him into the country for a day or two at a time, it was only by chance that he gave notice of his intended absence. Jeanne, therefore, when she heard from Fanchette that M. le Marquis had not returned on the previous evening, felt no misgivings as to her brother's safety, but only some slight disappointment; for the Duchess, who had aged a good deal of late, seldom showed herself now before three o'clock, and eating alone is dull work at the best of times. Jeanne, who was not of an age or temperament to care about food for its own sake, soon disposed of her solitary repast. She took a book into the dining-room with her, hastily

swallowed, while she read, such amount of sustenance as seemed necessary to support life, and then stepped out on to the verandah.

It was a cloudless summer morning; the town below was baking and sweltering in the heat, but here, on the breezy hill top, little puffs of cool wind rose and fell, bending the heads of the roses and the stiff white lilies, driving the spray of the fountain across the gravel walks, and rousing a soft sleepy whispering among the pine branches. The winter and spring were at an end; the rains were done with now till October at earliest, and soon the long, weary, hot season would set in, and the grass would grow browner day by day, and the leaves would wither on the trees, and the spikes of the aloes blacken and fall, and there would be no more roses, and every babbling stream would be silenced. But as yet the woods and meadows were still of a vivid green, the garden was ablaze with flowers, many-coloured butterflies fluttered and poised themselves over the beds,

little bright-eyed lizards darted hither and thither upon the stone-walls. All nature was astir and rejoicing in the sunshine and warmth; and the heat was not too great for comfort, but only sufficient to afford a good excuse for idleness.

Jeanne, who was by no means an idle person, had got through her day's duties long ago. She had ordered the dinner, added up her accounts, visited the animals, read aloud to the Duchess for an hour, and had now earned the right to drop into a rocking-chair and rest. She swayed gently to and fro, one foot resting on the ground, and presently her book slipped from her hand and she began to dream. Facing her, beyond the glittering blue bay and the sultry haze of the plain, rose the distant purple mountains behind whose shadowy folds and ridges Fort Napoléon lay hidden. Was M. de Saint-Luc still there? she wondered, or was he even now wending his way homewards, lonely and disconsolate? Poor M. de Saint-Luc! Jeanne had never known how much she really liked him till she had found herself obliged to deal him the cruellest blow that a woman can inflict upon a man. Remembering, with a pang of conscience, how unjust she had been to him, how she had snubbed him and tried to hurt his feelings, and with what quiet patience he had borne it all, she could almost have found it in her heart to wish that it had been possible to her to give him a different answer. But that could never have been; and since things were as they were, how much better it was that he should have spoken out and heard the truth. She would be able to treat him as a friend now; there would be no more misunderstanding; and probably he, on his side, would abstain from uttering those wearisome, laboured compliments which had sometimes made his presence positively hateful to her. "If he had only known," thought Jeanne, "what a foolish thing flattery is, and how it disgusts all sensible people! How different Mr. Barrington is! With him one can talk and feel at one's ease; he does not sigh and roll his eyes, and nauseate one with silly speeches."

But when Jeanne reached this point in her soliloquy, a slight conscious smile rose to her eyes and lips, and the faintest flush in the world appeared upon her cheeks. For the truth was that Mr. Barrington had spent the greater part of the preceding day with her, and had said some very flattering things indeed. But then, to be sure, they had not been silly—or she had not thought so. Alas! one man may steal a horse and another must not look over a hedge. Who gets justice in this world? And, for the matter of that, who wants it? If some people rate us below our proper value, others, no doubt, think of us more highly than we deserve; and were it possible to strike a balance and induce everybody to view our failings and merits with the same eyes, all the sunshine would fade out of life, and a dull business become duller yet. As for Barrington, he has been over-estimated on all hands throughout his life, and will doubtless continue to be so to the end of the chapter. Here was Mademoiselle de Mersac, who was worth a thousand of him, thinking over his wise and

witty sayings, dwelling upon his many accomplishments, mentally recapitulating the long talks she had had with him during that Kabylean excursion and since, and finding so much pleasure in this employment that she failed to note the passage of time, and was quite startled when a clock in the room behind her struck two. Then, remembering that she had some work to take to the sisters at the neighbouring convent, she rose, with a half sigh, fetched her hat and a huge white umbrella, and whistling to Turco, moved slowly away in the hot sunshine.

Five minutes' walk across the dusty high road and through a corn-field brought her to the vast, white, dreary building, with its long rows of small windows and its arched gateway surmounted by an iron cross. One of the sisters peered at her through a lattice, and then opened the door and let her into the cool gloom of the hall. Turco stretched himself out upon the doorstep, and panted, and snapped at the flies.

When Jeanne emerged, half an hour afterwards, and gazed with dazzled eyes into the blinding glare without, she became aware of somebody on a chestnut horse who dismounted as she drew nearer to him, and took off his hat, exclaiming, "So you have come at last! I saw your dog at the door, and I thought I would wait for you; but you were such a long, long time in appearing that I began to be afraid that you were not in the convent after all."

"How do you do, Mr. Barrington?" said Jeanne, holding out her hand in her grave, composed way. "I am sorry that you waited in the heat."

"Why are you sorry? For my sake, or for your own? If I am a bore, I will go away."

"Oh, no!" answered Jeanne, smiling a little. "On the contrary, I am very glad to see you; only if I had known you were there, I would have come out sooner. I was chatting with old Sister Marthe, who is fond of a gossip, and I always like the convent, it is so quiet and peaceful there."

"Isn't it a little like a prison?" asked Barrington, glancing back at the cold, bare structure. He had passed his arm through his horse's bridle, and was walking beside Jeanne towards the high road.

"I do not find it so," she answered. "Often I think that I shall end by taking the veil."

"Good gracious, how horrible!" exclaimed Barrington aghast. "What can have put such an idea into your head? You, of all people! Why, you would not be able to bear the life for a week."

"How can you tell that?" asked Jeanne, raising her grave eyes to his for a moment. "You have not seen the life, and perhaps you do not know very well what would suit me. I think I could be happy enough in a convent; all the sisters are contented. I do not speak of the present, of course; I have other things to do—Léon to look after, and Madame de Breuil. But changes will come: Léon will marry, and the Duchess is very old. One must think of the future sometimes."

"I hope," said Barrington, "that the future has some brighter destiny than that in store for you."

She made no reply, and the pair walked on silently side by side for another hundred yards or so. Barrington, when he alluded to the possibility of some bright future destiny for his companion, had a very distinct idea in his own mind of what he wished that destiny to be, but he had not yet quite decided that he would offer it to her. Or rather, though he believed his decision to be firm, and, indeed, had declared to himself more than once during the past four-and-twenty hours that it was so, he was not quite sure that he would take the present opportunity of revealing it. He was generally considered to be an impetuous, enthusiastic, romantic sort of fellow; but those who knew him best were aware that his character contained, by way of counterpoise, a strong underlying vein of prudence; and, moreover, that this prudence had a way of coming forward just in the nick of time, and had on many occasions snatched back its favoured possessor from the very brink of some rash action. He was very much in love with Jeanne de Mersac—more so, he thought, than he had ever been with any woman; but then he was also very much in love with himself, and the latter attachment, being of longer standing, was probably more deeply seated than the former. He would not, of course, have admitted this—indeed, he considered himself to be a man of singularly unselfish proclivities—but he had always looked upon marriage as a very serious step indeed, and one not to be taken without much forethought and deliberation. Without having given the subject any very profound consideration, he had nevertheless been, for some years past, pretty firmly convinced that, when the time should come for him to take a wife, his wisest course would be to select a lady for whom he could feel a sincere respect and esteem without having any romantic affection for her. The eldest Miss Ashley might do, or Lady Jane East, or one of the Fetherston girls. Any one of these ladies, and a good many others too, would, as he was aware, be persuaded without difficulty to share his humble lot, and dispense the hospitalities of Broadridge Court. The very best kind of wife obtainable—so Barrington had thought—was a woman neither above nor beneath her husband in rank, neither strikingly handsome nor absolutely plain, neither too clever nor too stupid—a woman who would dress well and manage her household properly, and keep on good terms with the neighbours, and raise no objection if her husband proposed to leave her for a few months at a time while he sought a relaxation in a yachting or shooting trip. Such had been his not very lofty ideal, and to it he had remained faithful through many a desperate flirtation. And was he now to throw all prudence to the winds for the sake of this pale, stately girl, whom he knew to be proud and fond of her own way, who might not improbably prove exacting, and who was a Frenchwoman and a Roman Catholic? He had put this question to himself, with some anxiety, the night before, and had finally answered it in the affirmative. True love,

he thought, should be strong enough to survive sacrifices, and if any such should be called for from him, was she not worth them? He would find an opportunity of seeing her the next day, and would tell her all. A tinge of uncertainty as to what her reply might be contributed to strengthen this heroic determination. And yet, now that the propitious moment had come, he found himself doubting, hesitating, weighing the old pros and cons over again. The upshot of it all was that when he broke the silence, it was only to say:—

"I suppose you will be at the Governor-General's ball to-night?"

"Yes, I think so. Madame de Vaublanc has offered to take me. And you?"

"I shall certainly go if you do."

Then there was another pause, which lasted until the gates of the Campagne were reached.

"May I come in?" asked Barrington. "I want to consult your brother about my horse, who has not been feeding properly for the last day or two. I fancy the heat affects him."

The pretext was a sufficiently shallow one, but it answered its purpose.

"Yes, pray do," answered Jeanne. "I am not sure whether Léon is at home, but I will find out."

She lifted a small silver whistle which she carried at her belt, and blew a shrill summons upon it, in answer to which one of the Arab grooms presently came running out.

"Yes," the man said, in answer to his mistress's inquiry, "M. le Marquis had returned, and had asked for mademoiselle; but, hearing that she was out, he had ridden away again."

"I daresay he will be back before long," Jeanne remarked. "Shall we go into the house and wait for him? It is too hot to sit out of doors."

Barrington followed her into the cool, darkened drawing-room, and, sinking into an easy-chair by her side, let his eyes roam abstractedly over the glazed tiles, the Persian rugs, the low divans, the nooks and recesses which had become so familiar to him. The piano had been left open, with a piece of music on the desk; his own picture of Jeanne on the balcony stood on an easel in one corner; on every table were vases and bowls filled with roses.

"What a charming room this is!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is a nice room," said Jeanne. Barrington had made the same remark so many times before that the subject appeared to her to be pretty well exhausted.

"How commonplace and vulgar English houses will look to me after this!" he went on. "My own drawing-room is tastefully furnished with white and green-striped satin; the carpet is white, with gigantic ferns and cabbage-roses sprawling over it, and the paper, which also has a white ground, exhibits a series of wonderful green birds sitting in gold cages. I often think it is the most appallingly hideous room I ever beheld."

"Why do you not re-furnish it then?" asked Jeanne, laughing.

"I suppose I shall one of these days. Just now it would be hardly worth while, for nobody ever enters it. The rest of the house is well enough, and I have an affection for the old place, though it is dreary work living there all alone. I wonder whether *you* would like it?"

Jeanne not feeling herself called upon to hazard any conjecture as to whether Mr. Barrington's house were likely to please her or not, he resumed presently, "I am sure you would like the garden. People tell me that the turf at Broadridge is the oldest in the county, and we have always been famous for our roses. There are some fine old trees in the park too. I should like you to see it all. Isn't there a chance of your paying your cousins a visit some time or other?"

"Not very much, I am afraid," answered Jeanne. "They have asked me several times, and I have always wished to go to England; but it is difficult for me to get away, especially in the summer, for then I go to Switzerland with the Duchess, and, as Léon does not accompany us, it would be impossible for me to leave her."

"To Switzerland? Dear me! I was thinking of going to Switzerland myself this summer," said Barrington, who had not until that moment had any intention of the sort. "I wonder whether we are likely to meet."

Jeanne's face brightened perceptibly. "I hope we may," she replied cordially. "Shall you be there in August, do you think? *À propos*, when do you go back to England?"

"I am not sure that I shall go back at all," answered Barrington slowly. "I hate London, and I don't want to go home. Why should I not stay here, and start when you do? Perhaps I might be of some service to you on the journey."

"Oh, how delightful that would be!" exclaimed Jeanne, half-involuntarily, clasping her hands.

And then Barrington suddenly lost his head. He saw that perfect pale face bent towards him, with parted lips and soft brown eyes with a glad light in them; he saw a blue dress upon which a stray shaft of sunlight fell, and a glittering silver necklace and a pair of joined hands, and he forgot everything except that he was alone with Jeanne, and that he loved her better than the whole world. Good-bye, caution! Good-bye, prudence and hesitation and cold common sense? He caught her hands in his, stammering in his eagerness, "Would it be delightful! Would you think it delightful?"

She drew back with a troubled, startled look. "What do you mean?" she murmured. "I—I do not understand——"

"Don't you understand that, if you will only speak one word, I will never leave you again? Don't you understand——"

At this most interesting and critical juncture a tap upon the tiles and the sound of an opening door caused the speaker to break off abruptly. He wheeled round just in time to see the Duchesse de Breuil make her entrance, leaning upon her stick.

Happily, the old lady's powers both of hearing and vision had become a good deal impaired of late; otherwise she could scarcely have failed to remark the agitation of the couple, whose *tête-à-tête* she had so inopportunistically disturbed. As it was, she noticed nothing, and sank back into her chair with some amiable expressions of the pleasure that it gave her to find Mr. Barrington in the room. She had taken a fancy to the Englishman, whom she had discovered to be not only a fair French scholar and a man of the world, but, what was better still, a patient listener; and, as she was in a good humour that afternoon, and felt garrulously disposed, she graciously made a sign to him to take a chair by her side, and began to talk politics. She had been reading the newspapers upstairs, she said, and from what she had been able to gather, it appeared to her that a crisis was imminent in France. That poor M. Bonaparte, with his *plébiscites* and his Olliviers, his caricatures of constitutional government, his failing health, and his disreputable relations, who carried revolvers in their pockets and murdered casual visitors, was evidently near the term of his rule. "They have begun to laugh at him already," said the old lady, nodding her head sagaciously; "and believe me, monsieur, when a man is laughed at in France it is time for him to pack up his trunks. You will see that before long we shall have a Red Republic; and when that has lasted a few months, the nation will return to its allegiance, and the king will ascend the throne of his fathers at last. Ah, I am an old woman, monsieur, and I have seen many things, and I know what my compatriots are. There was a time when I myself had some influence over the course of politics; but that is long ago, and everybody has forgotten all about it now. M. de Talleyrand, who scarcely ever missed one of my Thursdays, used to say that my salon was the only one in Paris in which he could count upon meeting everybody whom he wanted to see. That was when we lived in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and my poor husband was Garde des Sceaux." And so forth, and so forth.

Barrington bore it all with exemplary patience. A very small proportion of the Duchess's recollections reached his understanding; but he continued to look as if he were all attention, and, while he encouraged her to prattle on, stole occasional furtive glances at Jeanne, who was sitting a little apart, her hands loosely clasped on her lap, and a little bewilderment still visible in her face, but withal a certain soft joyousness which lent a new and wondrous charm to her beauty, and caused the heart of her wooer to beat high with happiness and hope.

He rose to go at length, and, as he bade her good-bye, held her hand a little longer than he need have done, and whispered, "Till to-night, then."

She said nothing, but raised her eyes to his for a moment, and dropped them again. And then he knew that he had got his answer.

CHAPTER XIV.

M. DE SAINT-LUC SHOWS HIMSELF IN HIS TRUE COLOURS.

EVERYBODY knows what it is to wake gasping, trembling, shuddering out of some gruesome dream—to feel even yet the tearing claws and fangs of an imaginary tiger, or the tremendous shock of a fancied railway collision. Gradually—very gradually—the mind of the sufferer shakes itself free from the hold of the dread vision. He rolls his eyes round the familiar walls of his room, and thankfully perceives that he is still there, and not in a Newgate cell after conviction of forgery. He feels for his right leg, and discovers that those two bloodthirsty surgeons who, a moment since, were slicing and sawing it off, existed only in a disordered imagination. He realises, with a deep sigh of relief, that he did not marry hideous old Mrs. Money Penny yesterday morning for the sake of her wealth; nor hear of the collapse of the undertaking in which his whole fortune was involved. Nevertheless, some shadow of the grim horror will hang over him yet for an hour or two, vexing him with a vague uneasiness, and, it is to be hoped, impressing him with an increased appreciation of the virtue of abstemiousness. But if such waking sensations be unpleasant enough, how far more terrible is their converse! Calm, peaceful night steals away, bright morning comes with sunshine and stir and sound of voices, and behold! health, wealth, contentment are but rapidly evaporating visions, and it is the nightmare that is the reality! Alas! it is *true* that you are a convicted criminal—Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson *did* put up their shutters yesterday morning, sure enough—What is that brown, fuzzy object on the dressing-table? Can it be an old woman's wig? Oh, horror, horror! What is done is done, and can never be obliterated in *sæcula sæculorum*.

Poor Léon de Mersac, starting out of a deep, dreamless slumber, to find himself in a strange room, and striving to recollect where he was and how he had come there, felt his heart die within him as the events of the past night slowly returned to his memory. His first impulse was to pop his head under the bed-clothes, and to make a despairing effort to get back into oblivion; but he very soon found that that would not do. Who can fight against patient, inexorable fate? The silly ostrich hides his head in the sand, and falls a prey to the hunter; the little diver-duck bobs under water, time after time, to escape from the gun-barrel that is aimed at him, but gets shot in the long run; and Léon, coming up to the surface at length, with a groan, had to confront a neat little column of figures terminating in an imposing total of fr. 255,800.

A knock at the door roused him from his woebegone contemplation of this tangible evidence of calamity, and presently in stepped Saint-Luc's valet, a dapper, smooth-shaven, soft-footed little fellow, with twinkling

black eyes and a perpetual smile upon his thin lips. Was M. le Marquis sufficiently reposed? he inquired in his pretty mincing Parisian French. He had been in once—twice before with coffee, but M. le Marquis was so profoundly asleep that he had not ventured to disturb him; and now it was already past ten o'clock, and M. le Vicomte had sent him to ask whether M. le Marquis would be ready for déjeuner in an hour's time. Then, having arranged upon the toilet-table and the sofa sundry articles which he had brought with him—brushes, razors, a clean shirt, and other necessaries—he requested M. le Marquis, in case he should require anything further, to give himself the trouble to touch the bell, and noiselessly withdrew.

With a heart as heavy as lead, Léon got up and dressed himself. "I wonder Saint-Luc is not afraid to trust me with a razor," he thought, smiling grimly as he took up that implement. He did not, however, allow his mind to dwell upon self-destruction, having finally disposed of that question overnight, but shaved himself with a tolerably steady hand; and, as soon as his toilet was completed, crossed the passage and entered his friend's sitting-room.

A pleasant rush of light and colour, and a fragrant scent of flowers and fruit, met him on the threshold. Beyond the wide-open French windows was a balcony, whose fluttering striped awning, while it shut out the full glare of the sun, did not exclude a glimpse of blue sparkling sea and snowy distant sails. On a breakfast-table, prepared for two persons, were arranged vases of flowers and dishes piled up with oranges, grapes, bananas, and pomegranates; the silvered necks of two bottles of champagne protruded from their ice-pails; and there, reclining in a camp-chair, was Saint-Luc himself, gorgeous in a crimson silk dressing-jacket, and perusing, with tranquil contentment, one of a batch of newspapers just arrived from France.

The sight of all this bright cheerfulness smote the incomer with a sensation of incongruity not unmixed with injury. He had hitherto been so completely occupied with efforts to realise and meet the catastrophe that had befallen him, that he had hardly found room in his mind for any feeling of resentment against the man who had, in so unaccountable a manner, been its cause; but now he did begin to wonder, with a certain dull pain, why he should have been treated with such deliberate cruelty. "To win a small fortune of your friend is allowable, and only the way of the world, I suppose," reflected this unfortunate young philosopher, "but surely it is scarcely good taste to invite him to make merry over his own ruin."

Saint-Luc tossed away the *Figaro*, and held out his hand. "So here you are at last, you lazy fellow," he cried in the most light-hearted manner in the world. "And how are you this morning?—the better for your long sleep?"

Léon, with a face as long as his arm, replied very solemnly that he was well enough.

"*Allons!* so much the better! And I hope you have a good appetite. For my part, I am ravenous—nothing makes me so hungry as a sleepless night. Do you like fresh sardines and *écrevisses*? I have ordered some. I don't know what the rest of the *menu* is, but I told them to put some quails in it. One does not always dine well in this country, but, heaven be praised, one can generally count upon a very tolerable breakfast."

"I can't say I feel much disposed to eat," answered Léon, with a growing sense of ill-usage. "The truth is that I am in great trouble about my losses last night; and my only reason for remaining here was that I must have a talk with you——"

"Ah, bah!" interrupted the other; "let us leave all that till after breakfast; there is no necessity for worrying ourselves about it now. And of course you know that I am not likely to press you for payment. Besides, such luck as you had last night must change before long. Very likely another evening at *lansquenet* may leave me in your debt."

Léon shook his head. "I have made up my mind," he said, "that I will never play for money again so long as I live."

"Really?" said Saint-Luc, looking at him curiously. "And you imagine that you will keep that resolution?"

"I *must* do so," answered Léon, simply. "I have sworn it."

"Ah! Well, I think you are right. But it is a pity that men invariably take these oaths at the wrong moment. It is after winning, not after losing, that one should bid adieu to the gaming-table."

Then the waiter came in with a tray full of good things on his shoulder; and for the next three-quarters of an hour the conversation turned upon all manner of topics save the one which must, all the time, have been present in the minds of both entertainer and guest. Saint-Luc did most of the talking, and did it well, exerting himself to interest and amuse his hearer, and meeting with some measure of success, though the latter felt more and more, every minute, the singular lack of sympathy shown towards him, and had to summon up a large reserve-fund of pride to cover his mortification. But when black coffee and cigarettes had succeeded to dessert, Léon thought he might, without impropriety, discharge himself of his unpalatable task.

"About that money I owe you, Saint-Luc," he began.

The vicomte blew a cloud of smoke, and nodded to signify that he was attending.

"I can pay you a part of it almost immediately; for the rest I must ask you to wait a few months, or perhaps longer. I need not trouble you with details; but when I tell you that I shall have to find a new home for Madame de Breuil and Jeanne, you will understand how painful any hurry would be to me."

"You don't mean to say that you think of selling the *Campagne*!" exclaimed Saint-Luc.

"Unfortunately I have no choice."

"And the farm too?"

"A part of it, certainly. Why, what else can I do?" cried Léon, with some impatience. "Do you suppose I have 250,000 francs at the bank?"

"Is it really so large a sum as that?"

"If you will look at the different acknowledgments I handed to you last night," answered Léon, with suppressed exasperation, "you will find that I am in your debt to the amount of exactly 255,800 francs."

Saint-Luc, in a leisurely manner, drew forth from his waistcoat-pocket a roll of crumpled papers, spread them on the table before him, and made a calculation with the aid of a pencil and pocket-book. "Quite right," he said at length. "That is the exact amount I took down after an original stake of ten napoleons. It certainly was a wonderful run."

"I suppose so."

"Wonderful! I can't at this moment call to mind having seen such another. Of course you pay me when and where you please. In the meantime, I suppose you fully understand that these slips of paper are virtually money—money paid by you to me."

"Undoubtedly," answered Léon, with a gathering frown on his brow which altogether failed to disturb his companion's equilibrium.

"So that to all intents and purposes I may now consider myself in possession of 255,800 francs, to do what I like with. Now there are many ways," continued Saint-Luc, stretching himself out comfortably in his chair, "of spending money won at cards. Looking back upon the rare occasions in my past life when I have netted large sums in this way, I find that my invariable custom has been to throw them out of the window, so to speak, with all possible despatch. I have never failed to repent of so doing, and have always, I believe, declared that nothing would induce me to make such a fool of myself again. In the present instance, however, I do not intend to depart from my usual course. I propose to send your money out of the window much more quickly than I ever sent any money before; and I anticipate nothing but satisfaction from the process."

And suiting the action to the word, Saint-Luc hastily tore up the sheaf of papers which he held, and stepping out on to the balcony, scattered the fragments to the four winds.

Then he returned, threw himself into his chair again, and burst out laughing.

"Confess, now," he said, "you have been thinking all this time that you were breakfasting with a card-sharper, have you not? What an opinion you must have had of me to believe that I was going to ruin you and turn your sister out of doors! Why, my dear boy, I did not want to win even so much as two hundred francs of your money. I put up that stake—why, I don't quite know—intending, if I won, to let you go on doubling till it fell into your hands. Then came those confounded

even cards and their absurd rule, which put me out a good deal. I could see nothing for it but to persevere till I lost; but I was uneasy, for I saw that you had completely lost your head (you may perhaps remember that I warned you beforehand that you would do so), and it was evident to me that you would continue to play like a lunatic as long as you could get anyone to play with you. Then it occurred to me that if I could give you a sudden overwhelming shock, it would bring you to your senses, send you straight home, and make you swear never to touch a card again. The event, you see, completely justified my forecast. My only fear was that you might have enough of common sense to perceive that no gentleman could by any possibility act as I appeared to be doing. But that, it seems, was a groundless alarm. You must forgive me for having frightened you out of your wits; and some day you will, no doubt, even thank me; for I presume that a man of your simple habits considers an oath as binding, and that you have played your last game of lansquenet."

Léon sat with his jaws agape, looking, if the truth must be told, a very considerable fool. His first sensation, on seeing those accursed papers fluttering gaily away on the summer breeze, had been one of intense relief, tempered by wonder and doubt. Then for a few moments gratitude had overpowered all other feelings. But finally, emotion becoming subdued by reason, all light and gladness faded out of his face, giving way to the black clouds of care which they had momentarily dispersed.

"You are very kind to me, Saint-Luc," he said slowly, at length—"at all events you have meant to be so. But unfortunately it is impossible that I should take advantage of kindness of that sort. Your having torn up a few bits of paper cannot alter the fact that I owe you 255,800 francs."

"Bah! You never owed me anything of the sort. For my own purposes I chose to make you think that you did—*Voilà tout!*"

"I lost the money fairly, and I will pay it fairly," answered Léon, doggedly.

"My good friend, you have paid me already. A tradesman sends you in his bill, and gives you a receipt in return for your cheque. If it pleases him to light his pipe with that cheque, what business is it of yours?"

"In such a case I should of course pay him again, and take care that he had ready money the second time."

"And if he threw the money into the sea?"

"Ah, that would be his affair. I, at least, should have discharged my debt. When I shall have handed you what I owe you, you will be at liberty to do what you please with your own."

"Léon, you irritate me; and in this hot weather I am not to be irritated with impunity. Have the goodness to understand, once for all, that what took place last night was a farce from beginning to end; that

I never had the most distant intention of winning your money—have none now—nor ever shall have any. In short, I will not take a single sou from you ; and that is my last word."

Léon shook his head.

"You forget," said he, "that others were playing with us, and saw me lose. What would they think if they heard that I had not paid my debt?"

"Who cares what they think?"

"You may not, but I do. I could not submit to be called a defaulter—nor indeed to be one. It is useless to argue about the matter. I have not your experience of the world, but I do know that every man who respects himself and wishes to be respected is bound by certain conventional laws, which may be absurd, but which are universally recognised. You may sacrifice your prospects, or your happiness, or even your life for a friend, but you must not give him money. And you know it as well as I do."

"I don't know anything of the kind," returned Saint-Luc. "I have given money to many a friend before now—or at least lent it, which is another way of saying the same thing. But that is not the question. Will you not see, oh, you most pig-headed boy, that I never really won your money at all?"

"Ask M. de Monceaux whether you did not, and see what he will say."

"I shall not ask him, and I don't care a rush what his answer might be if I did ; but this I can tell you, if de Monceaux were in your place he would not think for a moment of paying me after hearing my explanation of my reasons for acting as I did."

"Would he not? I am not very well acquainted with M. de Monceaux, but possibly in our family we may have a different standard of honour from his. I know my father would sooner have sold his coat than remain in any man's debt ; and I also have to remember that I am a de Mersac, and must think of the reputation of my family as well as of my own."

Léon was a little bombastic, but he was not altogether in the wrong. It began to dawn upon Saint-Luc that, with the best intentions in the world, he had done a very foolish thing. "Never, so long as I live," he exclaimed, "will I attempt to save a young idiot from the consequences of his idiotcy again! I sit up all night over a game of cards which I hate, with a set of men who bore me to death ; I play in such a manner as to bring down upon my head the scorn and indignation of the meanest of them ; and what is the result? Why, people who are not only innocent of all share in the transaction, but happen to be the very ones whom of all the world I most desire to serve, are plunged into misery, and will hate the sound of my name for ever ; and the very man for whose sake I incur all this obloquy declares his intention of ruining himself ten times more completely than he would have done if I had left

him alone. For heaven's sake, Léon, listen to reason, and don't drive me out of my senses."

Léon, however, declined to be persuaded. Neither eloquence, nor patient demonstration, nor entreaty availed to shake his stubborn resolution; nor, in the midst of all his own sorrow, was he free from a certain grim satisfaction at the spectacle of his mentor's distress. "You meant very kindly, I know," he said more than once; "but you have made a most unlucky mistake, and neither of us can repair it now."

Tired out at length, Saint-Luc desisted from further words and began to search in his brain for some expedient whereby the scruples of his debtor might be satisfied without any actual transfer of cash.

"I think," he said hesitatingly, after a rather long silence—"I think I can see one way out of the difficulty."

"And that is?" said Léon, with the air of one open to conviction, but very unlikely to be convinced.

"You said just now that a man cannot take a present of money from a friend—not that I ever proposed to make you such a present; but let that pass. One thing, however, you must admit; anybody may accept money from his nearest relations, and I think you could hardly refuse the sum in question if it were offered to you by—your sister."

"Quite out of the question," answered Léon. "Even supposing that I were enough of a scoundrel to rob Jeanne of her fortune, I could not do so. It is held in trust for her till her marriage."

"Yes; but upon her marriage I have heard—I understood," said Saint-Luc, a little confusedly—"that is, Madame la Duchesse told me, one day, that it would become her absolute property."

"That is so certainly, but——"

"Just allow me to finish what I was going to say. You know what my wishes have been, and are, with regard to your sister, and lately you have encouraged me to hope that, in spite of all that has passed, there might still be a chance for me. Well, supposing that I have the great good fortune to succeed, what I would propose to you is this. Let your sister, on her wedding-day, pay you 255,800 francs (a sum which is, I believe, more than covered by her dowry). You will then pass the money on to me, and all will be said and done. I don't see what objection you can make to such an arrangement. You must remember that, in suggesting it to you, I am thinking of her comfort as much as of yours, and that if you agree to it, you will spare her and Madame de Breuil an amount of unhappiness which, in my humble opinion, you have no right to inflict upon them."

Léon hesitated. Providence did, indeed, appear to offer to him, by this means, an honourable and easy road out of his troubles. There was something about Saint-Luc's proposal which was not altogether agreeable to him, and yet when he thought of Jeanne and the Duchess, it seemed to him that he would hardly be justified in rejecting it. One drawback, however, there manifestly was.

"But, Saint-Luc," he said, "if I agree to this you would lose 255,800 francs."

"I should lose nothing. You would pay me; and your sister—by a sort of fiction—would come to me with a diminished dower, that is all. Come, Léon, let us consider the matter settled, and say no more about it. It has given us both a great deal of needless worry as it is."

"Well, but then there is another thing to be considered. I can't answer for Jeanne; she may refuse you a second time. What is to be done in that case?"

"In that case—in that case—oh, well, we need not think about that now."

"But we must think about it. I am not sure that I am right in allowing you to cancel my debt at all, but I am quite certain that the thing can only be done by Jeanne's becoming your wife. Her refusal of your offer would leave us just where we were before."

"Léon, you are, without any exception, the most disagreeable young man I ever encountered. I will bet you 255,800 francs to ten centimes that I marry your sister. There!"

"I should not think of making a bet upon such a subject," answered the impracticable Léon.

Then Saint-Luc collected all the sofa-cushions and footstools he could lay hands on, and hurled them, one by one, at the head of his friend. A shower of crusts of bread, lumps of sugar and biscuits, followed in the same direction, and took such effect that Léon, half-laughing, half-indignant, was fain to seek shelter under the table. He bobbed up his head when the fire of projectiles had ceased, and exclaimed remonstratingly, "Saint-Luc, this is a serious matter."

"It will be for you presently, I can assure you. There only remains to me now a cut-glass sugar-basin, and at the very first word you utter having any reference to money matters, you get that basin full on the bridge of your nose. So now you are warned; and you had better go home as quick as you can. As for me, I am going out for a ride." And with that, Saint-Luc vanished into his bedroom, locking the door behind him.

Léon waited for a quarter of an hour, then knocked at the door, and, receiving no answer, went out into the passage to see if he could effect an entrance from that side. Saint-Luc's bedroom was occupied by a couple of housemaids, who were raising a cloud of dust from the carpet; the owner had fled. Under the circumstances it seemed best to Léon to return to the sitting-room and write on a sheet of paper:

"I agree to what you propose. Only, if you fail, you will understand that I still owe you the money. You will have to wait a little longer for it; but perhaps it is best so."

This brief missive he folded and addressed, and then set out homewards, greatly relieved in mind, yet somewhat uneasy as to the future.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE.

As Mr. Barrington was leaving the Campagne de Mersac by one door, after bidding adieu to his hostess in the manner already described, M. de Fontvieille was entering it through another. This was a very fortunate circumstance for Jeanne, since it gave her, ere long, an opportunity of slipping quietly out of the room and seeking that solitude which just then was her chief desire. M. de Fontvieille had brought with him a copy of Rochefort's new paper, the *Marseillaise*, and the two old folks were soon so fully occupied in perusing the elegant personalities of that gentlemanly print that they scarcely noticed Jeanne's exit.

She strolled away through the orchard at the back of the house, and thence through orange and lemon groves, where starry blossoms mingled with the ripe golden fruit, till she came to a low boundary wall, beyond which stretched waving corn-fields, ending in a waste of palmetto-shrub and barren upland; and there, perched upon a broad, flat stone, with her back against the trunk of a thick-leaved carob-tree, gave herself up to the unrestrained enjoyment of her newly-found happiness. Until that moment she had never said to herself in so many words that she loved Barrington; yet it had been so for some time past; and now that he had given her a right to interrogate her heart without shame, it seemed to her that she had loved him, and he her, from the first day of their meeting, and that his interrupted avowal was but the formal acknowledgment of a fact long since recognised by both of them. The difficulties which would have to be conquered before she could become Barrington's wife did not, at this moment, cause her any anxiety, though, if she had given the subject a thought, she must have perceived that these were likely to be formidable enough. The strenuous opposition of M. de Fontvieille and the Duchess; banishment from Algeria and from Léon; the serious disadvantages attendant upon the marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant—these were some among the obstacles which she must ere long face, and, if possible, surmount; but, in this first glow of joy, she was able to keep such considerations out of sight, and dwell only on the one triumphant thought that she was loved. "He loves me! he loves me!" she murmured to herself again—"and I—oh, how I love him?"

The loitering summer wind caught up this precious secret, whispered it to the awaying branches, which answered with a sigh, and bore it away seawards towards the town, where Barrington was even now sitting, with a half-pleased, half-puzzled face, saying to himself, "So I have done it at

last—that is, pretty nearly done it. I shall meet her at the ball to-night, and then it will be all over. I think I am glad—I am sure I am glad—of course I am glad—I could not live without her—and yet—” Barrington had been in love, and out of love again, many, many times, whereas Jeanne’s heart had remained untouched by any suitor till this Englishman had come and captured it almost without an effort. The one absorbing passion of her life had been her devotion to her brother. Since her father’s death she had given herself up so completely to him that there had been no room left in her nature for any warmer affection than a moderate liking for the rest of the world. And now, was his place to be taken by a stranger? This question was forced upon her rather abruptly by the sudden appearance of Léon at her elbow; and it was perhaps a twinge of self-reproach that made her embrace him more affectionately than usual, as she exclaimed—

“Léon, how you startled me! Did you rise from the earth or fall from the clouds?”

“No, but one’s feet get so swollen this hot weather that I put on my *spadrilles*,” replied that matter-of-fact young man, exhibiting a pair of canvas shoes. “I saw you a quarter of a mile off. What are you doing here all by yourself?”

“Nothing,” answered Jeanne, blushing a little. “I am so glad you have come back. I thought you must have gone to the fair at Bouffarik.”

Léon sighed. “I wish I had!” he muttered involuntarily.

“Why?” asked Jeanne, turning upon him with a quick look of apprehension. “Has anything happened? Where were you yesterday? At Madame de Trémouville’s?”

“Why on earth should I have been at Madame de Trémouville’s?” returned Léon, with a petulant gesture. “And what harm could have happened to me if I had been there? I believe, Jeanne, you would like me never to speak to any woman except yourself, Madame de Vaublanc, and the Duchess. I have lost a chance of selling some beasts by not being at Bouffarik—that is all. If you want to know where I was last night, I was in Algiers, dining with Saint-Luc, who has just returned from Kabylia.”

“Already?”

“Yes; there was nothing to keep him there after we had left, you know.”

Then there was a pause, after which Jeanne remarked, musingly, “I am sorry I have spoken so often against M. de Saint-Luc to you, Léon; I have liked him much better lately than I used to do, and I mean to be good friends with him for the future.”

Léon had a vague impression that, under the circumstances, it would be scarcely honourable in him to say much to his sister in Saint-Luc’s praise, but he did feel himself at liberty to observe—

“I think you are sometimes a little apt to be prejudiced, *ma sœur*.

There is Madame de Trémonville, for instance, a really charming person, whom I am convinced you would like, if you knew her better."

"Oh, never mind her," interrupted Jeanne, with sudden asperity. "She will do very well without my liking; and it is most improbable that I shall ever be better acquainted with her than I am. But I confess I was in the wrong about M. de Saint-Luc."

This was very satisfactory. Léon began to think that all would yet go well; that he would soon have the pleasure of welcoming Saint-Luc as his brother-in-law; that his debt would be wiped out, and that the only abiding result of last night's folly would be a fine crop of good resolutions. But all these fair hopes were annihilated by Jeanne's next words.

"To speak plainly, Léon," she went on, "I should not have disliked M. de Saint-Luc so much if I had not known all along that he was intended to marry me. And then what annoyed me was that, instead of coming forward in a business-like way, as all the Duchess's other protégés have done, stating his advantages and what he required in return for them, offering his hand, and being politely sent about his business, he would hang on and hang on, making me obnoxious presents and following me about whenever I entered a ball-room, and yet never giving me the opportunity of telling him what is the truth—that I would no more think of marrying him than—than old Pierre Cauvin."

At this forcible announcement Léon's countenance assumed an aspect of the most profound dejection; but Jeanne, who was looking down at the ground and tracing patterns with the point of her shoe, continued, without observing him—

"Now all that is at an end. Do you remember that night at Fort Napoléon, when he and I walked away together after dinner? Well, he asked me then, and I told him it was quite impossible. But I was very sorry; for it seemed that, after all, he had not been thinking only of making a good, suitable match, as I had supposed, but that he really did care for me for myself."

"He most certainly did, and he does still," broke in Léon, eagerly.

"Has he spoken to you of it?" asked Jeanne, looking up. "It is a great pity; I quite believed he was sincere; but what could I do?"

"Do you think you are wise to reject Saint-Luc, Jeanne?" Léon asked, after communing for a short space with himself, and deciding that he might permissibly plead his friend's cause to this limited extent. "I would not urge you to act in any way against your inclinations, but it seems to me that you start by setting your face against every man who might become your husband; and yet some day or other you will require a house and an establishment of your own. I don't know where you could find a better or kinder fellow than Saint-Luc. He is devoted to you; he would do everything he could to make you happy——"

"Yes, yes, I know all that," interrupted Jeanne a little impatiently, for she was not accustomed to being lectured by her younger brother.

"I don't doubt that M. de Saint-Luc is all that you say; but when I marry, if I ever do marry, it will not be for the sake of a house and an establishment."

"Not for that alone, of course."

"Not for that in any degree. Let us say no more about it."

"You will not even give Saint-Luc another trial then?"

"Another trial!" echoed Jeanne, with a little vexed laugh. "You talk of him as if he were a horse. How am I to try him, and what difference could a hundred trials make? If you will insist on having everything put before you in such plain language, Léon, I do not love M. de Saint-Luc, and shall never do so, though I may come to like him very much indeed. Pray do not let him think for a moment that it can be otherwise. If you were to do so, you would be acting very unkindly both to him and to me."

She was half-inclined to give her brother some hint that her heart was no longer her own to dispose of; but this she could hardly do as yet, not being formally engaged to Mr. Barrington.

"You mean me to understand then that your marriage with Saint-Luc is an impossibility?"

"It is as much an impossibility as anything in this world can be," answered Jeanne, emphatically.

"So be it!" said Léon, rising, with a deep sigh, from the stone on which he had been seated. "It is very unfortunate, but it can't be helped."

"But why should it be so unfortunate?" asked Jeanne, glancing up at her brother with some curiosity. "What reason can you have for wishing so much that I should marry a man whom I do not love?"

"What reason? Ah, that I cannot tell you. And yet," he added, with a sudden desperate resolution to confess the worst, and get it over, "why should I not tell you? You must be told soon—the sooner the better, perhaps. Jeanne, I am going to make you hate me—no, not hate me—that I know you will never do. I daresay you will not even be very angry with me, though heaven knows I deserve your anger."

Jeanne got up and seated herself beside her brother. She threw her arm round his neck and bent down her beautiful head till her cheek rested against his.

"Tell me all about it, Léon," she whispered. "You used always to come to me in your troubles, you know."

"Yes, always," he answered, with something between a sob and a sigh. "Do you remember, long ago, when we were children, M. de Fontvieille saying, one day, that you ought to have been the boy and I the girl? I was very angry with him at the time, but I have often thought since that he was right. Oh, Jeanne, I have made such a fool of myself."

"Never mind, dear," she said, stroking his close-cropped black hair.

"Whatever you have done, nothing can come between us two, or change our love for each other."

"No; that is the worst of it. If you would abuse me roundly I might be able to plead some extenuating circumstances for myself; but as it is, what can I do, except tell you the bare facts? It is absurd to apologise and say 'I am sorry'—there are injuries too deep to be atoned for by any apology, and it is a wrong of that kind that I have done to you." And then, without further preface, Léon gave a brief account of his adventure at the club and his subsequent interview with Saint-Luc. Jeanne heard him with the most unruffled composure, only interrupting his recital by an occasional expression of sympathy, till he explained to her the means by which he had hoped that the impending catastrophe might be averted. Upon that, much to the consternation of Léon, who imagined that he had got through the worst part of his confession, she withdrew her arm from his shoulder with a quick movement of repulsion, and starting to her feet, moved away a few paces. Her back was towards him, so that he could not at first see what an unexpected effect his announcement had had upon her; but when she turned round presently and looked at him, he involuntarily shrank back, for her face bore an expression of mingled scorn, pain, and humiliation such as he had never seen there before, and which, having once seen, he never afterwards forgot.

"So I was the stake for which you and M. de Saint-Luc played a game of cards," she said at length, in a low, hard voice. "I think you are right, Léon—you ought not to have been born a man."

"Oh, Jeanne!" he exclaimed, wincing under these cruel words, "what do you mean? What have I done?"

"Done! Only allowed a stranger to think that he might take your sister in payment of a gambling debt. Is it possible that you do not see what must have been the man's object all through? Of course he knew that you would pay him, and that I would rather sacrifice myself than ruin you. I will try to forgive you, Léon, but him I will never forgive to my dying day."

"Jeanne, you are quite wrong. You mistake altogether. I can answer for it that Saint-Luc was as innocent of any such notion as I was myself. It was quite understood between us that my debt to him was to remain the same in the event of your refusing him; and I told him that you would very likely do so. Don't think me worse than I am. I swear to you that it was for your sake, not my own, that I consented to Saint-Luc's proposition. How could I bear the thought of driving you out of your home by my folly?"

"I would do much more than give up a few luxuries for you, Léon; and you must know it. It is not that—not that."

And here, to Léon's utter amazement, Jeanne suddenly covered her face with her hands, and burst into a storm of tears.

Such displays of emotion were so rare with the calm, self-possessed

Mademoiselle de Mersac that her brother was as much shocked and startled by the present outbreak as if she had been a man. Not in the least understanding why she should have been so violently moved, he felt, nevertheless, that he had unintentionally wounded her far more deeply than he had expected to do, and, like a true Frenchman, he became at once infected by the sight of her distress till he was scarcely less agitated than she. He flung himself down on the ground beside her, calling her by every endearing epithet that he could think of, cursing his own stupidity and awkwardness, and beseeching for forgiveness so piteously that it would have required a much harder heart than Jeanne's to withstand his entreaties.

She grew calmer by degrees, and held out her hand to him, as she dried her eyes.

"I think I will go in now," she said, "I cannot talk any more just at present; but of one thing you may be sure, Léon—M. de Saint-Luc shall have his money, and it will not be necessary for you to give up the house or the farm."

Then she got up, and disregarding her brother's efforts to detain her, passed quickly away between the smooth trunks of the orange-trees, and was soon out of sight.

Her head was aching and throbbing when she reached the solitude of her own room and sat down to think; but she had all her wits about her—as indeed she always had—and the situation in which she was placed was as clear to her as daylight. Of course M. de Saint-Luc must be paid. Equally, of course, he must be paid out of her marriage-portion, since that was the only sum of ready money which the family could raise without grievous loss, scandal and humiliation. If, then, Barrington were to become her husband, it would be necessary that she should ask him to resign all claim upon the greater part of her fortune, and the prospect of having to make this request was a sore wound to her pride. To ask a favour, even of the man whom she loved best in the world, would be disagreeable to her; to ask for money would be more disagreeable still; to make her acceptance of his hand dependent upon his reply would be most disagreeable of all. The thing, however, had to be done; and Jeanne, who had never yet lacked courage in any emergency, made up her mind that she could do it without flinching. That Barrington would meet her with a refusal did not seem likely. She believed him to be a rich man; but even were he not so, his love, if it were worth having at all, must needs rise superior to mercenary considerations. Knowing that she herself would have laughed at the idea of any question of money creating a breach between them, she could scarcely imagine that he would show himself less magnanimous. But supposing that, by any chance, his masculine common sense or English phlegm should revolt against the frittering away of his wife's fortune to fill the pockets of a gamester, what alternative would then remain? This possibility also Jeanne forced herself to contemplate calmly, and arose from the consideration of it with some-

thing of a shudder indeed, but with no hesitation in her mind. Sooner than that the name of de Mersac should be disgraced and Léon's future career blighted, she would pay in her own person the losses he had so carelessly incurred, and become Saint-Luc's wife. Many another woman had gone knowingly to as hard a fate with a less noble aim in view, and had lived through it, and earned some sort of contentment, if not happiness. "And happiness is not everything," thought poor Jeanne.

The absurdity of sacrificing her whole life for a mere mistake did not strike her. To her, not less than to Léon, it would have seemed in the highest degree dishonourable to accept a gift of money or release from a debt, however contracted; and thus, at this turning point of her earthly course, she stood alone and unwavering, bright hopes on one side and utter darkness on the other, and all her future resting upon the will of a good-natured, romantic, selfish fellow, whose yes or no might be affected by his breakfast or the state of the weather, or any other trivial external influence.

Of this Jeanne was not aware; but she felt that so momentous an issue could not fitly be decided in a ball-room, so she sat down and wrote a few lines to Madame de Vaublanc, saying that she did not feel well enough to go to the Palace that night. Barrington would undoubtedly call the next morning to inquire after her, and then her fate could be decided at once and for ever.

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